

William Heard Kilpatrick

TRAIL BLAZER IN EDUCATION







Photo by Don Glassman

William Heard Kilpatrick

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by

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With an Introduction by
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WILLIAM HEARD KILPATRICK:

Trail Blazer in Education

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Introduction

In the best sense of the words, progressive education and the work of Dr. Kilpatrick are virtually synonymous. I say in the best sense because the phrase "progressive education" has been and is frequently used to signify almost any kind of school theory and practice that departs from previously established scholastic methods. Many of these procedures, when they are examined, are found to be innovations, but there seems to be no sound basis for regarding them as progressive. For progress is not identical with mere change, even when the changes may incidentally here and there involve some casual improvement over what previously existed. Still less is it identical with a happy-go-lucky process or flashy, spur-of-the-moment improvisations. "Progressive education" in the sense in which it properly applies to the work of Dr. Kilpatrick implies direction; and direction implies foresight and planning. And planning—as is surely obvious—implies taking thought; the quality and depth of the thought depending upon how large and significant a field is taken for the exercise of direction, foresight, and planning.

These remarks are, I believe, pertinent because what has often been criticised as constituting progressive education has taken progressive education to mean methods on the part of the teacher which are marked chiefly by following the immediate and spontaneous activities of children in the schoolroom.

Progressive education involves foresight and planning, which in turn requires some principles of organization. This does not mean that a fixed goal must be set up but that there must be a point of view from which to select materials and arrange them in some kind of order. Dr. Kilpatrick has amply met and fulfilled the conditions just stated, that is, of bringing together a wide and deep body of subject matter. That he has put the various parts of this material in orderly relations to one another is evident to anyone with even a superficial acquaintance with his work. In this connection, I have repeatedly been surprised, when there was discussion and perhaps controversy about some educational development in this country, even in regions quite distant from New York City, to find how complete and accurate was Dr. Kilpatrick's knowledge of what was actually taking place and of its significance, good or bad, for educational

progress. Adequate information, as distinct from hasty improvisation, has always been the groundwork of Dr. Kilpatrick's educational contribution to progressive education.

The phrase "philosophy of education," while it is the opposite of mere improvisation, is often treated as a complete system of ready-made fixed principles which can be laid down by someone already acquainted with them and which can be accepted ready made by students. This is as deadening in effect as the other unorganized procedure mentioned.

In Dr. Kilpatrick's educational activities, philosophy has taken the form of a moving development. Organization has not been so rigid as to exclude modification and enrichment as new issues and new problems are presented by the actual course of events. It is coming to be a fairly common remark that teachers themselves do not practice the processes of learning that they recommend to their students. That good teaching involves continual learning on the part of the teacher is a fact that is exemplified in Dr. Kilpatrick's work. In this way, he has successfully avoided taking the position of a dogmatic authority. He has recognized in his own teaching the fact that good teaching involves participation on the part of teacher and learner, that it is a reciprocal and not a one-way process.

The foregoing generalities may take on more concrete form if it is noted that Dr. Kilpatrick has never fallen a victim to the one-sidedness of identifying progressive education with child-centered education. This does not mean that he has not given attention to the capacities, interests, and achievements and failures of those who are still students; but he has always balanced regard for the psychological conditions and processes of those who are learning with consideration of the social and cultural conditions in which as human beings the pupils are living.

The common habit of separating one body of subject matter called social psychology from psychology proper and then confining psychology to strictly individual activities is an illustration. That human beings are always and fundamentally social beings is thereby overlooked to the detriment of sound educational practice. Dr. Kilpatrick has consistently avoided the purely individualistic psychology approach by taking into account the differing capacities and interests that necessarily characterize children as learners. The state of the world in which children and youth live as human beings and the need of considering the kind of social relationships in which they will live in the future—the issues and problems with which they will have to deal—has always been a guiding consideration in Dr. Kilpatrick's educational philosophy.

The "project method" is identified on a world-wide scale with the

educational contribution of Dr. Kilpatrick. As I learned on a visit to Russia during the early years of educational reform in that country, when there was still a considerable freedom, the guiding principle of their educational philosophy was the project method. Among the abler educators whom I met on that trip, the name of Dr. Kilpatrick was almost a household word. That these men were liquidated in the sense of either death or permanent exile is typical of the tragedy that has influenced every phase of life in the U.S.S.R. as personal freedom was suppressed, and then schools—and even the sciences and fine arts—became mere tools of a totalitarian regime. The earlier use of the project method is vital evidence of the balance that is maintained in Dr. Kilpatrick's philosophy and theory of education, namely, the development of individuality on one side and of social changes that are in the direction of betterment and human advance on the other side.

Specifically, the project method, as developed by Dr. Kilpatrick, involves the presence of a common purpose shared by teacher and learner, which extends over a considerable period of time, introducing thereby the continuity of development that is a prerequisite of genuine progress. The second main trait of the project method, I should say, is that it represents in terms of the attainments and capacities of the students some typical life situation in the world outside the schoolroom.

One of the soundest and most valuable features of the genuine progressive education movement has been that it strives to break down the walls erected to shut off the schoolroom from almost everything outside the school building. Under such conditions, learning for the great majority could have little direct bearing on the conduct of life outside the school building. Learning, when judged from the standpoint of actual practice, consisted largely in a passive reception of material which was already organized in books and in the teacher's mind from the standpoint of adults.

• The adult standpoint was naturally so alien to the processes of those undergoing instruction that learning became passive and the standard for testing it tended to be accuracy of formal reproduction. The project method represented and—wherever intelligently adopted—brought about a repudiation of this kind of teaching and learning in favor of active, vital participation of students in real human situations which, if necessarily on a small scale, nevertheless were significant in the situation in which the student lived and was to live actively in the future. In short, it was completely faithful to that phase of progressive educational theory which was concerned with the breakdown of the walls that had been built up between the school and the life situations in which pupils as

human beings lived but which they were not prepared by the school training to meet on account of the isolation of the school learning.

The traditional school against which progressive education reacted did not recognize in its practice that learning, of necessity, goes on in the years before the child goes to school and continues to go on the moment he arrives at home and shares again in family and neighborhood life activities. In consequence, of course, it had no concern with finding out how learning goes on most readily and most effectively. It had no interest consequently in learning about the way in which learning takes place as a necessary feature of the normal life of every human being.

I do not think it is a matter of accident that progressive education as represented in the project method originated in the United States. Although it is not as yet universally or sufficiently recognized that a democratic society means fundamentally the right of every human being to an environment in which his own personal activity will have an opportunity of full participation and development in social relationships, yet it can hardly be denied that democracy becomes an actual human fact only in the degree in which social customs and institutions are moving in this direction. Accordingly, a democratic school society operates as an agency for maintaining and developing a democracy only as it exhibits within itself the purposes and methods that a genuinely democratic life for the whole community must attempt to achieve. The aims and processes of learning, which have been so fully and concretely stated by Dr. Kilpatrick, form a notable and virtually unique contribution to the development of a school society that is an organic component of a living, growing democracy.

May I say in conclusion that it has been a great satisfaction to me personally to have been associated with Dr. Kilpatrick in the effort to develop a philosophy of education which will give direction to the promotion of the educational practices within a school society that will render education progressive from kindergarten through the university in the sense of promoting the progress of our common human life and of a society ever growing and ever more worthy, free, and just.

JOHN DEWEY

Preface

When I was a student, Professor Kilpatrick opened for me a new world; because of this experience, I never thereafter thought, believed, or acted the same. Professor Kilpatrick—as he did for thousands of other students—provided me with not only a philosophy of education but also with a philosophy of a life good to live. It is because of my belief that Professor Kilpatrick is one of the great teachers and the outstanding educational philosopher of his generation that I was prompted to write this book. •

Professor Kilpatrick was at times vexed with himself that he could find so little on which to differ with John Dewey. I am in a somewhat analogous position. I am vexed that I can find so little on which to disagree with Professor Kilpatrick. What Professor Kilpatrick stood for, what he advocated, how he viewed education seem so logical, so irrefutable that I cannot criticize or disagree. Hence, the reader who hopes to find herein a critique of Professor Kilpatrick's philosophy of education will be disappointed. I have tried instead to present as honest and fair a portrait as can be done with a living subject; and particularly have I tried to present Professor Kilpatrick's philosophy of education in a sympathetic way. It is my belief that once Professor Kilpatrick's philosophy of education is understood the reader will have acquired the best educational thinking of modern times; and simultaneously he will have gained an insight into the theory and the philosophy of the best of what has come to be called progressive education, its motivating impulses, its *raison d'être*, its goals, aims, and objectives.

• In this work I have had the fullest cooperation of Professor Kilpatrick. He has given me access to his diary, dating from 1904 and comprising about forty-four volumes; his personal letters, his scrapbooks filling more than twenty-four volumes, his vast output of published and unpublished material. He has also opened his files to me, and placed himself at my disposal to answer any question I might ask. He has always been ready to explain his views, to elucidate moot points, and to correct errors. I have taken full advantage of the opportunity to discuss with him many current problems in education and to probe him concerning his views and attitudes. I have tried to incorporate in the context many of the ideas

gained in such conversations. Despite the fact that the inclusion of such interjectional observations may have somewhat impeded the smooth continuity of ideas, I feel that Professor Kilpatrick's educational views and outlook are so important as to more than compensate for what at times seem like intrusions.

Professor Kilpatrick has also aided in arranging interviews with members of his family, friends dating back a half century, former students, professional colleagues and associates. In those instances where it was not feasible to conduct personal interviews, I have communicated with such persons by letter. This background material was supplemented by the modern miracle of electronics. On a wire recorder, Professor Kilpatrick discoursed on his life and philosophy; and on this same wire recorder, Professor Kilpatrick and the writer recorded numerous interviews. When transcribed, this material comprised over two hundred and twenty-five thousand words. It is for this reason that credit is not given in the text for all quoted material. Some of it came from recorded interviews, some from informal talks with Professor Kilpatrick, some from interviews with former students, associates and colleagues. For this omission of references I ask the indulgence of the reader.

Despite Professor Kilpatrick's fullest cooperation, it should be understood that I alone am responsible for the contents of this book; in no way did Professor Kilpatrick supervise, suggest, or edit any portion of it. I alone am responsible for what is included and for what is omitted; what has been stressed in his philosophy and what has been slighted. For good or ill, in all these respects, the book is my own. I have, however, tried to present a fair portrait, as honest as can be managed when so many living personalities are involved.

While a student of Professor Kilpatrick I was greatly influenced by a concept, first enunciated by John Dewey, and later elaborated in Professor Kilpatrick's courses, namely, the psychological vs. the logical. This concept is explained in the text. Briefly, it may be stated that the psychological approach tries to reconstruct the processes that lead the originator of something new—the inventor, the scientist, the writer—to his final conclusions. Inevitably associated with this creative process are groping, meandering, repetitions, false starts. In contrast to the psychological approach, the logical approach starts with the final synthesis, the final conclusions, and the final results, omitting completely all the "scrap" material and the inevitable waste incident to the final achievement.

I have tried to use the psychological approach, and for this reason the reader may find passages that appear repetitious; I have deliberately discussed many concepts from many angles and points of view. I believe that

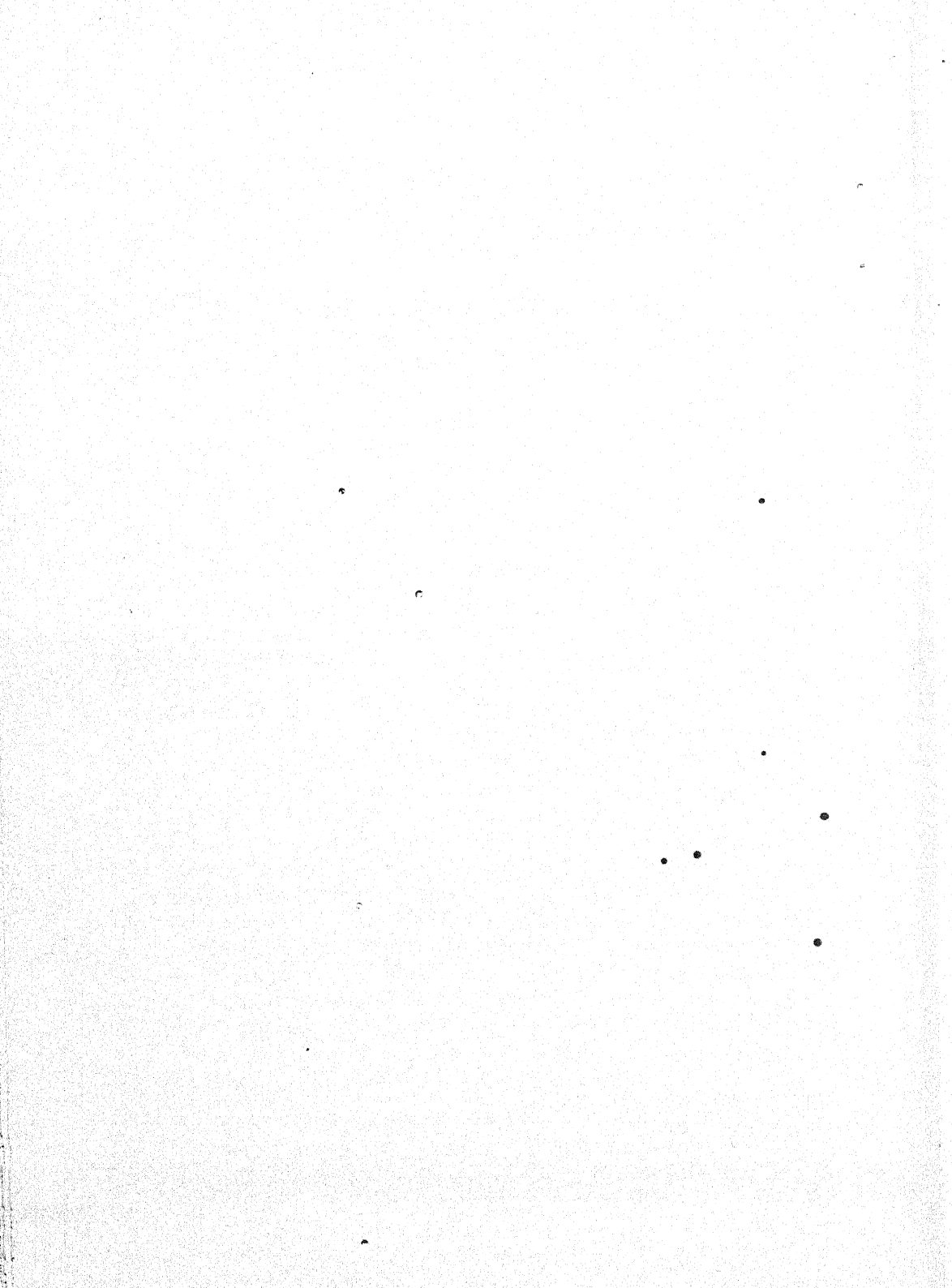
in this way these concepts can be presented more clearly, more vividly, and more meaningfully. For those readers who want to get at the heart of Kilpatrick's philosophy, it is suggested that they start with Chapter IX, "John Dewey and Kilpatrick's New World," perhaps also the chapter, "Mathematics, Formal Discipline, and Reason," and then continue on from Chapter XIV, "Two Thousand Years of Traditional Education."

In a work of this kind one becomes obligated to many persons. Since there is no adequate way to repay such debts one can only acknowledge them. Among those who were most kind in giving me generously of their time or have provided me with valuable information and insight, I should like to list the following:

Professors L. Thomas Hopkins, Roma Gans, Genevieve Chase, all of Teachers College, Columbia University; Professor Harrison Elliott, of the Union Theological Seminary; Professor I. B. Berkson, of the College of the City of New York; Dean E. O. Melby and Professors Walter Anderson and Alice Keliher, of the School of Education of New York University; Mr. Edward S. Lewis, of the New York Urban League; Mr. Frank Trager and Mr. Harold Schiff of the Anti-Defamation League; Dr. H. H. Giles and Mrs. Helen Trager, of the Bureau of Intercultural Education; President Guy H. Wells, of the Georgia State College for Women, Milledgeville, Georgia; Dr. Israel S. Chipkin, Mr. Emanuel M. Edelstein, Dr. Jacob Golub of the Jewish Education Committee; Dr. Aharon Kessler, Rabbi Michael Alper, and Dr. Zalman Slesinger, of the American Association for Jewish Education. Also I should like to express my thanks to those who were good enough to write to me concerning my subject. They include: Dr. D. O. W. Holmes, president emeritus of Morgan State College, Baltimore; Miss Helen Adele Whiting, of Atlanta University; Dr. J. W. Norman, dean emeritus of the University of Florida; Professor Solon B. Cousins, of the University of Richmond; Professor William F. Ogburn, of the University of Chicago; Dean E. T. McSwain, of Northwestern University; Judge Arthur G. Powell, of Atlanta, Ga.; Miss Julia Furse, Miss Romana Riley, Mr. F. W. Spencer, Mr. R. W. Edenfield, Mr. Francis T. Long, Mr. G. C. Tharpe, and Miss Lila M. Cabaniss. I should also like to express my gratitude to Mr. William Nosofsky, who read portions of the manuscript and discussed several phases of it with me.

THE AUTHOR

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PART I

Early Years



CHAPTER I

His Origins

UPON his graduation from Mercer University, James Hines Kilpatrick came to White Plains, Georgia, to teach school. After teaching one year in that community, there developed a need for a local pastor; and the young teacher was offered the position, which he accepted. In 1854 at the age of twenty-one, James Hines Kilpatrick became pastor of the White Plains Baptist Church, and he remained with his congregation for almost fifty-four years, until his death in 1908 at the age of seventy-five.

In this small agricultural town, located in the center of Georgia, with a population of no more than five hundred, the Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick's¹ name was something to conjure with. There his authority on morality and religion—and even in practical matters—was unquestioned. When he spoke the townspeople didn't know exactly where the words of their Bible left off and where their pastor's began; to them, what God wanted and what Dr. Kilpatrick wanted were one and the same thing.

The Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick was a man of forthright action, and what he wanted done was generally done. After the Civil War the thirty slaves he had inherited from his father were freed. Dr. Kilpatrick moved from his 1,600-acre plantation into town so as to be near his church. For the first time he saw the great amount of drinking that went on, and he was appalled. He devised a charter of incorporation for the village of White Plains; he mounted his horse and rode the thirty miles to Milledgeville, then the capital of the state; and there he arranged to have the charter adopted by the state legislature. He returned to White Plains, became the elected mayor; and under his administration the town passed an ordinance forbidding the sale of intoxicating liquor within a mile and a half of his centrally located church.

In the best sense of the term, the Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick was the patriarchal head of the community, a position won by unstinting and un-

¹ He was awarded the honorary D.D. degree by his alma mater, Mercer University.

selfish devotion to the community. He lived by and for his religion; and in all that he did there was a religious quality, as though he wanted the perfection of his deeds to be a tribute to God's perfection. His religion encompassed not only the ritual of his church, but his every action and his every decision. He surveyed land for his parishioners, made out wills, was an executor of estates, refereed neighborhood misunderstandings, pulled teeth for anyone who came to his home (he had learned this skill as the owner of a plantation on which his slaves lived); and he gladly performed marriage ceremonies without fee for any couple coming to his home.

Early in his ministry he was asked to come to Madison, one of the wealthiest small towns in Georgia. He deliberated a long time over this proposal and eventually turned it down. If he accepted this call, he reasoned, another might soon come and then another, and he would be moving about; and that was not what he wanted. Although he abided by this decision all the days of his life, he did not suffer thereby in prestige or fame, for he was among the most influential Baptists in Georgia, and in a secular sense, as a citizen, he was an outstanding figure in his region. From his small pulpit, he acquired encomiums and honors as come to few men. In his own church he was president of the Georgia Baptist Convention, and a trustee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and of Mercer University. And in time he became sufficiently prominent to be listed in *Who's Who in America*.

The Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick married Edna Perrin Heard on December 20, 1870; he was thirty-seven, she was twenty-seven. For him, it was the second marriage. He was a widower at the time with five children, three boys and two girls. The second Mrs. Kilpatrick has been described as a "dainty little woman," with "a gentle spirit" and "a rare sense of quiet service." She was a graduate of Southern Masonic Female College in Covington, Georgia, and after graduation she taught school in the surrounding country. William Heard was born November 20, 1871, the first of this union; three other children were to follow, two girls and one boy.

The relationship of Heard² and his mother was idyllic. From all accounts, Mrs. Kilpatrick was a sympathetic, generous, friendly woman, who loved people just because they were people. While his father was stern and exacting, his mother, on the contrary, was warm and loving. From her, he says, he got a sense of belonging, a feeling of security and of adequacy. She regarded Heard, her first-born, with special affection.

² His mother always called him Heard. William might become Bill or Will, and she didn't want her son to be known by a nickname.

Heard remembered his mother for her "fine consideration of other people. I never heard her talk to anyone in a sharp tone of voice. She sometimes punished me, but never in anger—never the slightest. My present guess is that it was just as painful to her as it was to me. She helped me early to learn not to be selfish, that I must give to others their just due; thus helping me early in life to balance the personal demands that might have been selfish against the rights and the demands of the other people."

Heard was an ideal son. Mrs. Kilpatrick, already a widow, wrote to him in 1912: "As I write, I hear a widowed mother and her grown only son quarreling in the adjoining apartment. I have even heard profanity from him. . . . It is a pleasure to me to feel that I have to go back to childish misbehavior to find any sort of even temporary alienation. If either you or I have in thirty years in any degree raised or quickened the voice in speaking to each other save in gladness I have no recollection of it."

Heard pleased her from the moment he was born, for he was a "fine-looking little baby (weight nine pounds) with the bluest of blue eyes"; even in the matter of learning to walk he did exactly the right thing to please her. The family had been trying to get him to walk by his birthday, ". . . and on the morning, before breakfast, you began [and] you walked all day as if you wanted to satisfy us," she wrote to him on his forty-first birthday. "And you have continued to give us our wishes in most things during your life so far. Not many mothers, I am sure, have had so few heartaches as I from any trouble with my sons."

Even in the storm and stress of adolescence, Heard displayed no emotional histrionics; there never was a strain or clash on this quiet, affectionate understanding. In reminiscing about his adolescence, he says: "I felt some tension from time to time when things I didn't like happened. My mother said: 'It's all right. The same thing happens to almost everybody at this age.'"

"I observed all the regulations that people laid out; there's no doubt about that. For instance, I never used the word 'damn' but once in my life . . . I have quoted the word of course. At school, there was a bug flying around and he got into the water; we began to throw mud at him. I went off and got some mud, and I said, 'Where is that damn bug?' The children around were shocked. They said, 'Heard cursed.' They never told the teacher; otherwise, I would have been whipped severely. I was six years old. That's the only time that anyone to this day heard me utter that word.

"The same is true for other things. I kept all the regulations. I've been married three times. Those were the only women I ever had dealings with—those three women. I never drank; I never drink anything. I have oc-

casionaly tasted wine, but from principle I make it a rule not to. My mother was a slave to coffee. I made up my mind I would be a slave to no such thing; so I stopped drinking coffee while at college. At times, out of courtesy, it may be convenient to break this habit, so I do it because I do not want to create a fuss."³

This warm affection between mother and son continued until her death. He still has about one hundred letters that passed between them; letters in which he urges his mother to visit summer resorts at his expense; to make home improvements at his expense; to visit him in his New York Morningside apartment house with an "elevator," to go to a larger town for specialized medical help, etc.

She in White Plains kept him abreast of town news: of neighbors, courtships, births, marriages, deaths. And in all these details, Kilpatrick had an avid interest. For more than a quarter of a century after he had left White Plains, while he was living in the North and while he filled the role of a distinguished professor at Columbia University, he thought of himself—proudly—as a Southerner. He was in emotion and in feeling a most unwilling expatriate. He frequently cried out against his lot that kept him living in strange lands. Some people, he once told his mother, do not want to return home; while he craved that eventuality with every fiber within him. To Heard, the fruit that came from the family orchard was something special and the arrival of his mother's sausages in his New York home was a matter of gastronomical rejoicing. He cherished southern traditions, customs, folkways. Although far from the scene, there was no more avid student of the South, especially of Georgia and the Georgia Baptist Church, in which fields he can be ranked as an authority. He is still recognized as the family historian and, despite his undeviating and obsessive devotion to his scholarly work, he has managed to find the time to compile a number of volumes of family records and genealogical studies.

His affectionate relationship with his mother made a deep impression on his character. Years later he was repeatedly to say that whatever success he may have achieved as a teacher he attributed to the fact that she inculcated in him a "fine sensitivity" to people—not to hurt anyone no matter how lowly.

³ "Have you ever been tempted by what society regards as evil?" I once asked him.

"Not a great deal. Sex never particularly tempted me; certainly not gambling or drinking, for neither of which I care anything about; and certainly I have never been tempted by money or the desire for it." Asked whether he was tempted by power, he said he wasn't so sure about that. "I always wanted to be toward the top, not so much for power, but that's where I wanted to be." Asked whether to achieve this goal he ever did anything of which he might be ashamed, he said, no, he was fortunate; he nearly always got "near the top" without the need for any manipulation.

In her letters Mrs. Kilpatrick showed a natural concern for her son, as well as great interest and pride in the scholarly progress he was making. She always worried lest he work too hard; she knew how he became possessed by work and never knew when to stop. On his promotion to an associate professorship at Teachers College, she wrote: "When you are head of that department, will that be as high as you wish?" When his fame had spread, so that an organization in a nearby town was planning to invite him as a speaker, she wrote to him how pleased she was: to think that a person of his years (he was forty-five), when most others of his age were looking backward and not forward, he continued to learn, and to achieve and to grow. Always, however, she wanted him to use his position to do good and to be of service, for from him who has reached position much is expected.

She appeared frail in body, but in spirit she was strong and indomitable. When told by her son in the summer of 1912 that he was bound for Italy to study the Montessori system, she wrote him: "Our papers have been filled with news of the *Titanic*.⁴ It has not made me any more nervous about your trip. In fact, I think it likely that everything will be managed more carefully in the future—at any rate for a good while. I will be relieved when you have made your return trip, but I do not say do not go. We are all running risks all the time."

In contrast to his mother, Heard's father was rather stern and somewhat forbidding. In him there was no light talk, no banter, no frivolity. He had one passion: his religion; that was his life. There was no easy camaraderie between father and son; raillery was unthinkable with such a formidable figure. Heard felt aloof and distant from him, but he was respectful of him, as was everyone else. The family relationships, however, were always harmonious. Heard never remembers any household dissension, harsh words, or even a raised voice.

On the occasions when Heard came home on college holidays and the family gathered on the piazza, the Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick never joined them. He couldn't understand how people could allow themselves to waste time so foolishly. He would go into his study, light the lamp, and until bedtime busy himself with his books and his writing.

In his own way, the Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick was a man of duty and he provided zealously for the legitimate needs of his family. He sent all his nine children through college. He could not have managed this if he had been altogether dependent on his income as a minister; he owned, besides his home and his 2½-acre garden, one hundred acres just outside

⁴ The *Titanic* sank in 1912 with a loss of 1,517 lives, probably the greatest such disaster in maritime history.

of town and about sixteen hundred acres six miles away. Despite this, the Kilpatrick household was not blessed with an abundance of money and it took careful planning to provide for the large family. As Heard says: "We looked at money a long time before we decided to spend it."

Despite the severity of his father's character, Heard has the highest admiration for his mental ability. In all his many contacts in the academic world, he says he has met at most two or three men (in this connection he mentions Dewey and Thorndike) who had minds as good as his father's. To his father he attributed his respect for careful thinking. "He constantly told me: 'You must think, my son, notice what you are doing; think about it.' If anyone used bad thinking, bad logic, he caught the error and pointed it out."

In many respects Heard resembles his father. His father kept meticulous records; so does the son. Since 1904 Heard has kept a diary, day by day, until now it comprises 45 volumes; his letters of a personal and family nature fill boxes. They are all carefully preserved in neat bundles, many of them indexed. Like his father, he is a prodigious worker, and his work overshadows his life, dominating and possessing him. Even now at the age of seventy-nine, he puts in a day of work that would break many a man forty years his junior. Like his father, he is a man of serious purpose and resolve; like his father, there is in him no light or small talk. To carry on a conversation which has no serious purpose is almost painful to him. Like his father, he is a man of rectitude and right; and like his father, he will lash out against what he thinks is inequity and evil, fearlessly and forthrightly. Like his father, he never hesitates to speak his convictions no matter how unpopular the cause for the moment may be. Like his father, in his quiet, diffident, aloof way he emerges as "top man or near the top." Like his father, he is a man of punctuality. His typist once told me: "If Professor Kilpatrick has an appointment at three-ten, he is there exactly at three-ten, never later." Like his father, he is an orderly man, following a routine with clocklike regularity. Despite his almost fanatical preoccupation with work and his immersion in social causes, he has, like his father, always maintained an open door to anyone who wanted to consult him; especially to those who have felt aggrieved and believed they were the victims of injustice. When I once asked Professor Kilpatrick how he managed to find the time, he said simply: "If there is any injustice afoot, I should like to know of it."

The Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick did not require his children to attend school before they were eight. Heard chose to start school at six. He was an excellent pupil, and he remembers being asked by his teacher to help

boys several years older than he was. He adds: "I don't say that that's good education; I only say that it happened." A diary which he kept at twelve contains this constant refrain: "went to school and knew my lessons"; infrequently appears the notation "missed one in spelling."

Heard was a wholesome boy, happy in doing the expected in connection with the main aspects of small-town living—home, church, school, relatives, and neighbors. Asked if he remembered any childhood tensions, anxieties, or vivid experiences, he answered, not particularly; but there were two incidents that have left indelible impressions upon him. They both concern school. He related the incidents, as follows:

When first he went to school, he inadvertently, while playing in the schoolyard, stepped on a little girl's hand. "It hurt her and she cried. Somebody told the teacher and the teacher called me in and said, 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself to hurt a little girl?' Well, I wasn't a bit ashamed. I hadn't meant to do it. I was sorry I had done it, but I wasn't ashamed. I hadn't done anything wrong and I resented that way of talking, and that stayed with me. And it stayed with me until I was older, until I began to teach. I was determined never to treat a child like that—to find out what were the facts, what the real truth was, before I did or said anything."

And here is the second incident:

"When I was twelve I had a teacher who introduced something new. You had to pronounce the word before you spelled it; if you didn't, that counted as a miss. One day I was head of the line. She gave out a word and I spelled it. She passed it on to the next person, counting me wrong. This girl spelled it exactly as I did. 'That's right,' she said, 'go up front.' I said: 'I spelled it that way.' 'Yes, but you didn't pronounce it.' I said, 'I did.' I was probably mistaken, but I thought I had, or at least I had meant to. Well, I didn't like calling a failure to name a word a miss in spelling and I showed it. The next day this girl missed a word on purpose, so I could return to the head of the line."

We find in Heard's childhood no real rebellion, no real grievance, no soul-racking disturbances. Even in the schooling, the methodology that he was to revolutionize, he felt no sense of hurt. He got along well, and he thought that school was doing what it should—educating and helping him. As he says, "I followed, abided and agreed to the conventional regulations."

He read widely, anything he could lay his hands on; he ransacked the considerable library of his father. Here he found mostly religious tracts, Sunday-school texts, stories with a religious moral. Without his realizing

it, this reading influenced him considerably, for he became expert in Biblical knowledge and developed a strong interest in theological religion.

When Heard was fourteen years and ten months old, he joined the church; he did so under dramatic circumstances. Two of his sisters, one just recently graduated from college, died the same day of typhoid fever. "The whole town thought highly of them and everyone was deeply stirred," Heard relates. "It was terrible for my father and it profoundly influenced me. The tragedy occurred during early August. Almost at the same time my cousin died—a young girl of about thirteen or fourteen. About the same time the Charleston earthquake occurred, which frightened many. Toward the latter part of August my father invited a minister to conduct revival services. Well, the deaths of my sisters and my cousin and the earthquake and the man's preaching, which stirred up a great many people—all this together created in the community considerable emotional disturbance and more people joined the church that month than ever before in the history of the town. And I was one of them."

The hope began to stir in his father that Heard might become a minister. The Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick had been unfortunate with his other children. Two of his other three sons had never joined the church. Only James, his eldest, had experienced this regeneration, but apparently it was not real or lasting, for the congregation eventually expelled James (his father concurring in the decision) for drinking. And later he had to see this same son, an acknowledged atheist, name his children after such nonbelievers as Darwin, Huxley, and the like.

So now, somewhat timidly and hopefully, the Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick broached the possibility of Heard's becoming a minister. Heard told him that he did not feel the urge or the call. His father was disappointed, but it would be unthinkable for the Reverend Dr. Kilpatrick to press or urge any religious decision. He believed that such matters were within God's province and that it was sacrilegious to interfere.

CHAPTER II

His Education

IN 1888, when he was seventeen, William Heard Kilpatrick entered the sophomore class of Mercer University, a Baptist denominational school, now located at Macon, Georgia. There was never any question about which college he would attend. His grandfather had been one of the founders of this university and one of its original trustees. His father and his uncle were both graduates (each with first honors) and later became trustees, and his three brothers had studied there.

Mercer University had once been a snug institution financially, favorably and well regarded, with high scholastic standards. But it had come upon sorry days—economically, intellectually, spiritually. The economy of the South had been ruined by the Civil War; the substantial families, who had supported the Confederacy with fervency, suffered heavy losses in repudiation of loans they had made; their plantations had been wrecked and pillaged; and, worst of all, they found they could not operate the land profitably after their slaves were freed. Life was indeed hard in the South. Money was scarce, industry nonexistent, and opportunity limited.

The defeat of the South had left behind a backwash of spiritual decay. The young people seemed without energy and without hope, for tomorrow seemed dim and uncertain. Kilpatrick tells of a classmate, highly intelligent, who, whenever he contemplated the bleak future that lay before him went into town and got drunk.

When Kilpatrick matriculated at Mercer, it had an enrollment of approximately one hundred. Here was no intellectual fervor, no new horizons that quickened hearts and made men strive, no iconoclastic thinking that broke encrusted traditions; no idealism that uplifted the spirit and made men try for finer things.

In many respects Kilpatrick was typical of his classmates. He came to Mercer without vocational plans or driving ambitions. He came with-

out adolescent dreams; he did not conceive of himself as a Shakespeare, a Beethoven, a Michelangelo; as a possible savior of mankind; as a great writer, a great scientist, a great educator—or a great anything.

The faculty was aged and anything but brilliant. Kilpatrick, however, did find in his first year a young instructor who impressed him greatly.

Professor Manly, who taught classical languages, had recently been graduated from the University of Virginia, then greatly respected for its high scholastic standards. Like a one-man outpost in a heathen land, he meant to maintain these standards. He failed his students mercilessly; he literally mowed them down. Of him, the college annual said: "He shall not receive mercy, for he showeth none." His uncompromising attitude was largely responsible for Mercer's small enrollment, as he constituted a one-man bottleneck through which few emerged successfully. And yet Kilpatrick took a great fancy to young Professor Manly.

"Every good man in the class," he says, "admired and looked up to him. He was the kind of man who would admit a mistake. For instance, a boy would read a passage in Greek, and he'd say, 'Yes, that's all right.' Another boy said, 'Prof, I read it this way.' 'Well,' he said, 'let's look, let's see. Yes, that's better. That's the way to read it.' He would admit that before the class, and that made us feel that he really was a man. We believed in him."

Kilpatrick began to think seriously of more specialized study of Latin and Greek, perhaps to teach those languages.

At this juncture the Mercer Board of Trustees became tired of Professor Manly's "standards," which had depopulated the institution, and they asked him to leave.

His successor was nearly his opposite. He was hard, exacting, dogmatic; and intellectually dishonest. He was insecure about his subject, and this insecurity made him uneasy and disagreeable; he resented contradiction; and he was in deathly fear that his ignorance would be discovered. "Once," relates Kilpatrick, "a student referred a certain infinitive in Aeschylus to a certain verb. My friend, John Wade, who was graduated later with first honors, said: 'If I am not mistaken, professor, I found in Liddell & Scott's lexicon that very verb under another root.' He said, 'No, you're mistaken.' When class was over, my friend and I got a copy of the lexicon, found the verb there, and then went to his office. When the professor answered our knock at the door, he saw us, became perturbed and said, 'I don't care to look at your lexicon.' So we all despaired him from then on."

As a result of this unpleasant instruction, Latin and Greek became by association unappealing, and Kilpatrick was again vocationally without moorings.

Even at this stage Freud would have had a difficult time explaining him. His libido and his subconscious did not bother him. He was hard working, energetic, finding his pleasures in his schoolwork, in his fraternity, in his school associations. Outside of his day-by-day tasks, which he did superbly well, he still had no driving ambitions.

In his junior year he showed an aptitude for physics but in mathematics he excelled. He was conceded to be the ablest math student of his class. His instructor in calculus had been teaching at Mercer for fifty years; in fact, he had taught Kilpatrick's father. He was so set in his ways that he was irritated and disturbed when a revised edition of his old trigonometry text appeared, and he had to struggle through strange pages to find his old problems. He had an old calculus book, in which through the years he had recorded what he thought were correct answers. "I made him change at least one of those answers and several other students made him change several others," relates Kilpatrick. "It took hard arguing. At times he refused to acknowledge a wrong answer; he really didn't want to know that he was wrong."

His brilliant work in mathematics set Kilpatrick thinking of devoting himself to that subject, perhaps as an engineer or as a teacher.

During his junior year he read a book which was to move him profoundly, change the course of his life, and have repercussions on all that he thereafter did and thought. The book was *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. To understand what this book meant to him, it is necessary to understand that Kilpatrick grew up in a community that was a fortress of Baptist strength—the most religious section of a most religious state; and further, he grew up in a home which was the staunchest defender of the faith. Hence, it was only natural that religion should hold a strong interest for Kilpatrick, and it remained for him a primary interest, whether he believed or not.

•Kilpatrick had heard of *The Origin of Species*; he had heard that it was a wicked book and that no nice person ought to read it. He was curious to see for himself. One day he borrowed the book from the library of the Literary Society.

"The more I read it," he says, "the more I believed it and in the end I accepted it fully. This meant a complete reorganization, a complete rejection of my previous religious training and philosophy. By accepting Darwin's *Origin of Species*, I rejected the whole concept of the immortal soul; of life beyond death, of the whole dogma of religious ritual connected with the worship of God."

For Kilpatrick it meant a cataclysmic upheaval. He spoke to no one of the change within him. Outwardly he continued as always. He had

seen from firsthand experience what pain came with open disavowal. His three brothers had rejected religion before him, and he knew of his father's grief and anguish. When his brother Macon renounced religion, he remembered vividly the hostility of neighbors. His uncle, Dr. Howell, came to his mother and said, "Macon is doing serious damage. Do not let him talk to Heard; keep Macon away from him."

Speaking of his own rejection of religion, Kilpatrick said: "At the moment, I did not have anything to put in its place. It was rather a rejection of what I had previously thought. But, contrary to what many people have prophesied about such matters, it did not change in any way my moral outlook. I now had no theology, but my social and my moral life continued in exactly the same way."

Kilpatrick regards his senior year at college as a failure. Vocationally planless, scholastically drifting, he did not even have the stimulus of competing for academic position. Graduation honors had already been determined; those who had lost out stopped competing and the dullards had come to know their place.

"We had a course in moral philosophy, now called ethics. We used a text written in 1853; the book didn't appeal to us: it dealt with problems that were remote and that for us had no immediate concern. It was a 'bookish' course, for which we took an examination and then passed or failed. It meant nothing to us personally; it made no contribution to our living. So all this brought a letdown, an intellectual and moral letdown. We had a good time socially, we knew a lot of girls in town and we all went out together. I suppose my main absorption and interest were in my friends, especially my fraternity friends."

Intellectually, Heard was closest to his brother Macon, seven years his senior. About him he was to say again and again, "He helped me form my mind." Macon was preparing to become a doctor, but in the interim he taught for several years; and Heard had assisted him during summer vacations in his junior and senior years. In intimate correspondence with him Heard expressed his hopes, his gropings, his fears. He asks Macon his opinion of teaching. And like a youth, whose visions soar, he writes: "I would not think of teaching in a one-horse school. I suppose that if I determined I might get a professorship. Of course, I would not think of taking one unless I was prepared." The mighty lion becomes the next moment a timid mouse. "Do you suppose I can stand a first-grade examination; and if so, can I get a permanent license?" He is worried about a job; he wants Macon's advice as to whether he should become a businessman.

He perceives difficulty about becoming a teacher. True enough, he is five feet nine inches in height, but he is slight, weighing just over a hundred pounds; he is soft spoken, shy, and withdrawn. He fears that after looking him over a school board would entertain grave doubts that this slight, modest young man would ever be able to discipline a class. He writes to his brother: "One of the sorriest freshman lately left to take a school at \$125 with the prospect of more. Another freshman had an offer of \$100 a month. . . . In spite of all this, I would not get a position at \$40 on account of my insignificant stature and youthful appearance."

Typical of youth, he is full of worry, he is pessimistic, burdened with the weight of the world.

In 1891 he was graduated second in his class; and at his commencement he delivered the Latin salutatory. Before graduation, he had been approached by Dr. G. R. McCall, secretary of the Board of Trustees of Mercer University, who suggested that he do graduate study at Johns Hopkins in mathematics and physics, and then later come to assist the aging Joseph E. Willet, professor of science, and perhaps eventually succeed him. Not having strong leanings in any other direction, he considered this proposal with favor.

Dr. Kilpatrick's income was not sufficient to provide for graduate study for his considerable family; so Heard borrowed \$500 from his favorite brother, Macon, and started for Johns Hopkins for what proved to be the most moving intellectual adventure of his life.

Raised in a rural community, educated in a conforming denominational school, he saw for the first time earnest, probing, searching students; a breadth of vision that he never knew existed; he saw free, inquiring, critical minds relentlessly searching for truth, regardless of the traditions and customs that emerged shattered from the process. At Johns Hopkins there existed no absolutes, no belief too sacred to be questioned; nothing that had to be accepted on faith.

"Even by breathing the air," he says, "I could feel that great things were going on. I have never been so deeply stirred, so emotionally moved before or since. I had the feeling that here was the intellectual center of America. And I was eager to join this exciting new world; I too wanted to merge myself in this avid pursuit of truth." Once, when recalling this period, he wrote: ". . . This institution had the power to influence a youth of twenty beyond anything now known in America." And he was twenty.

Before the founding of Johns Hopkins in 1876, there was no real uni-

versity in America, not in the way we understand this term, he says. Harvard, Yale, Princeton were essentially undergraduate schools; they may have had law, theological, or medical schools attached to them, but to be admitted one did not have to be a college graduate. Harvard and Yale both awarded Ph.D. degrees, but both universities regarded graduate work as essentially side issues. In this Johns Hopkins differed from all universities existing in America at the time. Postgraduate work at Johns Hopkins was its very substance, its *raison d'être*. For a time the institution's trustees debated whether they should include an undergraduate school at all, but, on consideration, they concluded that such a school was advisable because students might come with inadequate preparation.

Kilpatrick still remembers how students talked in awed tones about this professor and that professor, what new discoveries they were making, what new ideas they were expounding. For instance, there was Professor Rowland and his machine for making concave gratings to measure wave lengths, a machine so sensitive that it was shut up in a separate chamber, for if one so much as opened the door the movement would affect its recording. And to think that this device—created right here—was being used by every university in the world, even in Europe! As Kilpatrick says: "I had hitherto never been associated with anyone who had made such a great contribution."

Talking of the difference in student attitudes, he said: "At Mercer, when a professor did not appear on time, the students would slip out hastily, in fear lest he come. At Johns Hopkins, if a professor didn't show up, they stayed on and complained. They didn't like it a bit. At Mercer, the learning was essentially extrinsic; the faculty had set up chores, and if we wanted sufficient credits to graduate we had to complete them. At Mercer, every time a professor stayed away, it meant that we had fewer disagreeable chores to do. At Johns Hopkins, the students were engrossed in purpose; the learning was intrinsic. And when a professor stayed away, the students felt aggrieved; they wanted and expected and looked forward to his help. I fell in with this spirit."

Kilpatrick soon discovered that even with his new zeal for study life was not going to be easy. In the world of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. At Mercer, Kilpatrick showed remarkable aptitude for mathematics;¹ at Johns Hopkins, he could not at first hold his own.

When he came to class the first day, his instructor said: "Now, I'm

¹ For this reason he majored in mathematics at Johns Hopkins and minored in physics, rather than the reverse.

going to give you 'the theorem of the mean.' I'm sorry I can't refer you to any English book for help; you'll have to get this in German."

He then wrote this on the board: "The integral from O to large X, f of x , ϕ of x , dx ." And he said: "Where ϕ of x is a continuous function and does not change signs between the limits, then it will be true that this differential f of x , ϕ of x , dx will be equal to some constant times the integral f of x dx between the limits O and large X."

"When he said that," relates Kilpatrick, "I looked up bewildered. I did not understand any more of that than anyone who had never studied mathematics.

"A few days later, he gave us a quiz, saying, 'I won't count this; I just want to see how you are getting on.' When the papers were returned, I found out what I already knew. I made close to zero. I then went to see him. He said: 'You haven't studied integral calculus.' I said no, I studied differential calculus. 'You have a college degree, haven't you? What kind of a college were you graduated from?' Well, I said, not too good. The math professor was an old man. 'I would advise you to get Newcomb's Calculus and read it.' This again was surprising to me, for it was the first time I had ever heard anyone talk of reading (not studying) a book on mathematics. I did as he told me, and for two or three weeks I studied thirteen hours a day."

When the next quiz papers were returned, he saw a 1 inside a circle. He didn't know what that meant, so he asked his neighbor.

"You made a 1!" he exclaimed respectfully. "Why, that means you made an A."

In all that year of "major math," Kilpatrick never made a mark less than A or the circled 1.

The methodology of one of his professors was to have a lasting influence on him. This man was Professor Craig, chairman of the mathematics department, with whom he took a rather difficult course in differential equations. Ordinarily, instructors were in the habit of sending students to the board, with directions such as the following: "You take Problem No. 1; you take No. 2," and so on. But Professor Craig did no such thing. When he asked students for the first time to go to the big blackboards that surrounded that large room, the students stood at their places bewildered, looking up at him, waiting to be told what examples to work. And then he said: "Work any of the examples, any that stumped you, any you had trouble with."

"This was the first time," said Kilpatrick, "I heard a professor talk as if he trusted me to come to him with problems on which I needed help. Hitherto, the instructors called on students to check on them, to mark

them. Professor Craig really wanted to help us. I never knew that such wonderful things went on in the world. And then next year when I began to teach algebra at Blakely, I used that method. And it worked."

"In high school teaching!" I said. "Weren't you afraid that students might shirk their work?"

"Well, I knew the class. I always made it my business to know my students, to know whether they were working to capacity without resorting to this crude kind of checkup. I watched carefully everything that went on and I knew what they were doing."

"If you really want to help students, wouldn't you say that this was the best way to go about it? Isn't it true that the person who wants to learn should ask the questions? In the ordinary classroom, the teacher asks the question. Shouldn't the process be reversed?"

"Yes, you can say that. When you have teachers ask questions to check on students, you align students on one side and teachers on the other, and each tries to outwit the other."

While attending Johns Hopkins, Heard roomed with his elder brother, Macon, who was studying medicine at the Baltimore Medical College. Macon had emancipated himself from the dogmatic environment of the rural community in which he had grown up. He had read Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer and had been much influenced. The two young men discussed the flood of new ideas that were gripping Heard, as in a vortex. Macon was sympathetic to Heard's religious apostasy, for he, too, felt that Darwin's position was strong and irrefutable. In a tribute to him, Heard says that Macon helped him out of his "religious maze. He helped me into a sane and scientific view of life." He was now more certain than ever that he was justified in rejecting conventional religion.

CHAPTER III

Kilpatrick: The Schoolmaster

AT THE end of his year at Johns Hopkins, Kilpatrick returned to Macon to attend the Mercer commencement and to obtain his M.A. degree on the basis of his Johns Hopkins graduate work. Really, he came there in the hope that the promised teaching assistantship might be offered him. But in the interim Mercer had undergone a drastic faculty reshuffle, and Kilpatrick discovered that in the mix-up he had been forgotten.

He was now without prospects. He was deeply interested in mathematics, but he had no money to continue his studies. He thought of teaching school as a temporary expedient, to provide the wherewithal to carry out his purposes. A Mercer fraternity brother and classmate, Arthur G. Powell, told him of a teaching vacancy in his home town, Blakely, Georgia, and thought that through his father he might manage to get Kilpatrick the position.

"The school board looked me over," relates Kilpatrick, "and they thought I appeared too young and small. They were afraid I couldn't manage the class. But they had heard such good things about me that they agreed that John Wade, my good friend in college, and I should act as coprin cipals. At the end of the year, Wade dropped out and I remained behind as principal for the two succeeding years."

For \$900 a year, Kilpatrick at 21 undertook to teach algebra and geometry and to supervise the Blakely school, an elementary and high school, located in a fine old agricultural community of twelve hundred persons in extreme southwestern Georgia. Since he had no pedagogical courses, Kilpatrick promised the school board to attend a summer normal school at Rock College, the first such institute organized for teachers in Georgia.

From his work at the institute he gained new insight into the learning process, especially from two incidents which permanently remained with him. One of the instructors, Mr. Otis Ashmore, told of a parent who

visited his science class in a Savannah high school. The visitor looked around for the teacher, who was nowhere to be seen, but he did see students so engrossed in laboratory work that he wandered about unnoticed. He finally interrupted one of the students to ask where the teacher was. The student stopped his work momentarily to tell the parent where Mr. Ashmore might be and then continued with what he was doing. The visitor was tremendously impressed by this experience, as was Kilpatrick by the recital. If given a fair chance, thought Kilpatrick, students can run things themselves and they can assume responsibilities. That marked the beginning of an ideal in his own educational philosophy.

Kilpatrick and Ashmore became fast friends, and, as we shall see later, Ashmore was instrumental in bringing Kilpatrick to Savannah as principal of an elementary school.

At the institute Kilpatrick also heard a lecture, accompanied by slides, on the educational philosophy of Pestalozzi: how Pestalozzi rejected all punishment in connection with teaching; how he got children engrossed on working away at meaningful experiences. And from this, Kilpatrick caught from another angle this ideal which was beginning to take hold—the desirability of self-assumed responsibility and of meaningful, interesting child experiences. He also remembered Professor Craig at Johns Hopkins, who sought to help students, not to check up on them or to mark them.

“Putting all those three things together,” he says, “I began to get a new direction.

“Let’s contrast the old and the new. In the old, the primary concern was the mastery of the book; the primary focus, the be-all and the end-all of educational process resided in the textbook. The teacher mapped out lessons, and he conducted recitations and held examinations on the book. If the child failed in the mastery of the book, the teacher meted out some kind of punishment. And the child knew he would get into trouble if he failed to master the text on which recitations and examinations were held. It wasn’t necessary for the student to understand the content, to like it, to need it for any purpose or to be interested in it. He had to learn it in about the same way as the book set it out, and then regurgitate it as nearly as possible as the book set it forth. If the child was fortunate enough to understand the book, he generally complied. But there were many children who couldn’t, no matter how they tried, understand. Nevertheless, they too had to learn the book in exactly the same way as those who did understand. If they didn’t, they were

judged, marked and punished, as if they had committed some serious infraction.

"So you can say that under this arrangement the teacher stood on one side and the pupil on the other side, and each one tried to outwit the other. And many children, unfortunately, built attitudes to resist as much as they could, to escape as many of the disagreeable tasks as they could; to rejoice when a holiday came; to rejoice when the end of the year came; to rejoice when playtime came; to rejoice when they could get out of a recitation."

If a child failed in mastering the book, I pointed out, he was considered lazy or insubordinate. Any child, it was assumed, who worked hard and conscientiously, could get 100 per cent and if he got less than 100 per cent, to that extent he deviated from rectitude and right; it showed indolence and bad character.

"That's right," continued Kilpatrick. "If you go back far enough, you will find this rhyme: 'The idle fool is whipped at school,' which indicates the way they looked at things."

"You weren't ready to attack that notion yet?"

"No, but I began to perceive that this was a wrong way; also, I began very soon to introduce changes. To illustrate: in the first year at Blakely I continued the custom of issuing regular report cards. I abolished that in the second year; instead, I wrote an informative letter to the parents, telling them about the kind of work their child was doing. In my third year I abolished even that. I made no regular reports; I informed the parents that if anything special developed about a child I would discuss it with them personally."

- Although Kilpatrick started this practice in 1892-1894, he feels as strongly today as he did then that the traditional report card is an educational abomination and that it should be eradicated root and branch from our school systems. It sets pupil, he says, against teacher; it creates animosities, inferiorities, frustrations; it disturbs the wholesome relationships between child and teacher, between child and parents, between the child and the community and between the parent and the community. Not only does it do irretrievable injury to the failing child, but it does harm even to the successful and the fortunate. It encourages the child who gets all A's to feel superior and to act snobbish toward his less successful classmates, making wholesome character development more difficult. For the failing child, who gets all F's, the harm is serious, for this child loses status not only with his classmates but also with his parents at home and oftentimes with himself.

Kilpatrick detests such crude and mechanical means of evaluating

and appraising a child. He says: "If wives and husbands kept tab of one another, marked each other up or down, and then handed each other report cards at stated intervals, no more devastating intrusion could be conceived to damage that marriage."

Observe, he says, what school children talk about. You will notice that the talk centers round teachers and marks, not around the intrinsic subject matter or the activity itself. This sort of thing is inevitable, he maintains, as long as teachers hand out traditional report cards. The child loses sight of the intrinsic content; instead, his thoughts center around the following: Is he a mean teacher, a strict teacher, a good teacher? By a good teacher, the child means: Does he prepare you for tests, and are his tests easy, and does he give out high marks?

A report that has a legitimate place, says Kilpatrick, approximates what a wise, intelligent mother tells her husband when he has been away on a prolonged trip.

Instead of using the report card, Kilpatrick sought primarily to get children in on things, to get their help and cooperation. It was a method of trusting the children to do the right thing. "I can give you an illustration of that. In the traditional school, if a child wanted to leave the room, he had to get permission; he wasn't allowed to talk to another child, nor to change seats. I told my children they could leave the room if they needed without asking permission. They did and I watched carefully to see that they came back at the right time."

"In the event that they didn't, that they took advantage, or that they left in droves, what would you have done?"

"I would have spoken to them, and if I couldn't manage, I would have told them that I had made a mistake. But they didn't take advantage, not a single one. Of course, I didn't introduce these changes the first day. I introduced them gradually, as I learned all about my children; and when I understood them and could manage them.

"I allowed children to talk to one another, but I watched to see that they were talking about the lesson. If they weren't, I would cast a direct look at them. If they didn't see me and stop, another child would poke them. I let children move from seat to seat, but again it had to be in connection with the lesson."

"The old pedagogy held that if you let children talk," I pointed out, "you were creating a noisy room and they would get into the habit of talking, even when you wanted them to be quiet."

"That wasn't true, they didn't make noise, they behaved all right. In dealing with human beings, one encounters difficulties, but certainly they are not created by trusting children.

"As principal of the school I had to visit other rooms, and that meant I had to leave my class unsupervised. Some children took advantage of that. One boy didn't see me come in. I came in by the back door, and I saw him standing near the window throwing chalk at some boy outside. I didn't say a word; I just stood looking at him until every eye in that room was on him and on me. And then he turned around and saw me. They all looked at him, but I didn't say a word to them or to him. The next day I met him on the street. He was walking just ahead of me and I caught up with him. I said: 'Ed, what do you think of a boy who, when the teacher leaves the room, throws chalk that doesn't belong to him out of the window?' He said: 'I don't think that's right.' 'Now, Ed, I'm going to expect you to carry out from now on what you say is right.'"

"And that's all the punishment I meted out. I never punished a single one of my pupils in the three years I taught in that school. I never used corporal punishment. Not on one of my pupils. I was principal, and some of the other teachers would send children to me, and I couldn't go back on the teacher."

"But with your own children you didn't depend on the use of physical force?"

"No, not a single one."

"And that was from the first year you started as a teacher, when you really had no deep interest in pedagogy or in the philosophy of education, when you were merely trying to do better what teachers before you had done and what teachers were now doing? You weren't really critical of education as it was going on; you were only trying to do as good a job as you could under the circumstances. You were finding out that these new methods worked."

"Everybody saw they worked."

"What was the most important innovation you introduced at the time?"

"It was trusting the child, getting him in on what was happening. I wanted each child to feel that I was trying to help him."

"You had not formulated your own philosophy of education, but you were beginning to perceive that if you could get children to work on their own ends without supervision, that if they did something by themselves, it was better than when a teacher imposed a task upon them."

"I wanted as much of that as I could get. I wanted the children on my side; I wanted no division, the teacher on one side, the children on the other. I'll give you a particular instance of what I mean. There was one boy that had been a bad boy in the town; he had been fined in the courts for gambling; he couldn't find any work to do and he came back to school. He didn't fit anywhere. He was too old for the class in which

he belonged, and I didn't know what to do with him. I said, 'Frank, I don't know what to do with you, but I'll tell you what I propose. I'll get you some books that I think you can work at; and you work at them; and when I have time, you bring your work up to me and we'll talk it over. But I can't put you in any class; you don't belong in any.' My heart sank when I saw that boy because I greatly feared I couldn't do anything with him. But I watched him and whenever he could work the lesson he was a good boy. If he couldn't, then he'd get into trouble. But the more he worked with me the more he believed in my way of doing things, the closer he came to me and to my side. We had a law—I didn't pass it; it was passed by the school board—that when any two boys had a fight both of them had to be whipped. I had nothing to do with the law but to carry it out. That law bound me as well as them, and the boys knew it. Toward the end of that year Frank was challenged by another boy to fight him. He came to me and said: 'If I have a fight, I want you to know that I don't want to fight, and that I'm going to do everything I can to get out of it.' And they didn't have the fight. And this was an allegedly bad boy, and that's what happened.

"I might mention one instance where I think now that I did the wrong thing. I was teaching pupils how to extract cube root. At present I don't think that's worth bothering with. But I did then, and I didn't know any way to explain the rule of cube root because it was too complicated. So I said to them: 'This is one rule you have to learn as a rule; there's nothing else you can do. You learn this rule and I'm going to hear you say it out, and everybody has got to say this rule exactly as it's set down.' The next day I took my book and I went and stood by each one as he said it, so I could be certain to hear what he said. There were several that missed. I said: 'No, you didn't get it right, you must stay in after school and learn it.' That was practically the only time I ever made anybody stay in after school. After dismissal, those who stayed behind got out their books and went over to one side, and they sat; but I could see they weren't studying, and they kind of passed the word around that they could stay there as long as I could. I could see it. So I had to beat them at their game. We stayed an hour. I said, 'All right, we'll take it again tomorrow afternoon.' That was a little more than they had bargained for.

"The next morning after we had finished our work, several boys resented what I was doing—especially this bad boy that I mentioned. He got out his book but I thought he wouldn't study. I thought I would have to say something to bring him around. So I said: 'Frank, I want to have some meter sticks made; they cost too much to buy.' This boy's father ran a woodworking shop. 'You know those meter sticks we were talking about. What kind of wood do you think would be the best?' He said that ash

would be the best. I said: 'You tell your father to make 36 meter sticks for me. I want them 40 inches long. The meter is really 39.37, but I want them at least 40 inches long.' He said: 'I'll do it.' I hadn't sat down before Frank came over to me and said: 'I can say that rule.' He had shifted that quick. That was the only time I ever kept anybody after school, and the only instance where I ever made children learn things in that sort of way. It didn't work, and I didn't do that any more. I don't believe in that way of doing things."

Although he came to Blakely primarily for the purpose of earning money to continue his education, he was soon immersed in reading and thinking about educational problems. He returned to the summer normal institute each year; the last summer he brought his class to the county teachers' institute to put on a demonstration lesson. Present was E. C. Branson, who "knew more about such matters than anyone in the state. He was carried away with what he saw—with the way the pupils talked and recited. He told people that I had the best school in the state. As I look back—now that I have learned more about such things—I am inclined to believe that he was right." •

During his last year at Blakely he organized a county educational association, so that teachers could come voluntarily together for discussion of professional problems.

His relationship with his pupils was always close and personal, like a continuing friendship. He showed me a picture of his Blakely class, which he taught nearly sixty years ago. During all these years, time has not erased his vivid recollection of each of his students, nor of his interest in them—every one of them. As he looked at this old class picture he could tell, with one or two exceptions, a continuing story about each of them: This one came to Columbia to take up short-story writing; this one is a Georgia farmer; this one became ill and moved to California; this one became a rich businessman; this one contracted an unfortunate marriage. And thus he talked intimately and knowingly of boys and girls he had taught nearly sixty years ago. He was surprised that I was surprised. "They were my girls and boys," as if to say, what sort of parent would forget his own children?¹

A word should be said about Francis Parker, since he figured so largely

¹ Miss Furse, who taught under him in a Savannah elementary school, writes as follows: "Meeting Dr. Kilpatrick many years after teaching under him, I was taken aback by his memory. He remembered in just what seat his pupils sat; he remembered all by name. He and I had a good laugh over one of the little boys who had been in my class. He even remembered the boy's name."

The writer saw him pick up a commencement program of Mercer University, where he had taught a half century ago and point to each graduate's name in seriatim order and talk as intimately about each graduate as if he had visited his home yesterday.

in Kilpatrick's early educational thinking. In the early seventies Parker went abroad and studied at the University of Berlin, and while there he was strongly influenced by the teachings of Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Froebel. On his return to America he became superintendent of schools in Quincy, Massachusetts, where he stirred the community with a new attitude and outlook on education. Kilpatrick calls him the first of the really progressive American educators and says that he was a forerunner of Dewey, although Dewey denies such influence by him. Parker later became principal of Cook County Normal School, Illinois, and while there he came to know John Dewey. Parker advocated a form of education that can be described as fairly close to experiencing; he wanted everything taught in terms of sense experience. He wanted children to feel, smell, see, touch, and taste things. Kilpatrick now feels that he undervalued motor experiencing—doing and making. Actually, however, he did not discredit this kind of educational activity; only he did not integrate motor doing specifically into his educational philosophy. Kilpatrick believes that "Francis Parker was the greatest man we had to introduce better practices into the country's schools. I would say now that he took Pestalozzi's ideas and improved and enriched them and carried them forward. He preceded Dewey, but Dewey came along with a much finer theory, a much better worked-out theory."

Kilpatrick heard Parker talk at a teachers' institute in Albany, Georgia, in 1892, and he was moved by what he heard; and thereafter he read widely about this new educational movement. One book in particular, *The Quincy Method*, stands out. "It went into all that I did," he says. "It helped me to see a new vision in education."

Although Kilpatrick felt pride in the way he had taken hold and managed his first teaching and supervisory experience, his main interest was still mathematics and not education. "I had saved up enough money," he says, "to pay back the \$500 my brother lent me and enough to return to Johns Hopkins. So, in 1895, I set out again for Baltimore and for further study."

His return to Johns Hopkins proved disappointing and disillusioning; the university was not as he remembered it. He might have grown in the interval; he might have become more critical, but this he did know: His new group of professors were not nearly so inspiring or so important as his old professors. He now suspects that the institution may have lost some of its money, and, as he says: "If a university hasn't any money, your best teachers are tempted away and your most promising teachers stay away."

He had shifted his minor from physics to astronomy because astronomy, he thought, was more closely correlated with mathematics, his major. But his mathematics and astronomy instructors were not "first class intellects. They were good men, good ordinary men, but not great men. And the work became a chore."

The longer he stayed at Johns Hopkins the more convinced he became that he could not achieve here what he wanted. Since France at that time was the "leading mathematical country in the world," he decided to finish the year where he was, and then go back to teaching; and when he had saved enough money he would journey to Paris for further study.

It was pure chance that determined his future consuming interest and lifework. Although never a popular mixer—he was shy and could not make light conversation²—he nevertheless developed close and deep associations with one or several coworkers. His friendships were nearly always exclusively working friendships, for, just as he found it painful to "make" conversation, he delighted in serious discussions in connection with his work, and in such conversations he was eloquent, passionate, and fervent.

One such associate was a schoolmate, Walter Montgomery, who later became professor of Greek at the University of Virginia. Montgomery proposed that they take their second minor together, but Kilpatrick could not think of any that could be combined with such dissimilar subjects as mathematics and Greek. Montgomery said: "I've heard that philosophy will be accepted for either one." "So we inquired," says Kilpatrick, "and we found that it was true. We chose a course in the history of modern philosophy. I really enjoyed that course. It opened up a whole new world of thought to me, and it became, as I look back, a dominant part of my life."

His whole concept of religion also underwent drastic changes. He discovered—it came to him like an unexpected bolt from the sky—that philosophers were arguing all the time about God. "They didn't question

² After attending a reception for foreign students when he was a professor at Columbia University, he confided in his diary that "in fact, I am a very unsocial being. The absence of small talk nearly ruins me."

In a letter to his sister, Helen (April 30, 1933), he writes: "I do not quite understand why we did not acquire any better social conversation. Mother talked well and easily and liked to talk. Father did not, but we were much more with mother. But you may remember when you and Macon and I . . . were at the Sanfords' in Woodville, how shy we all were and how readily the Sanfords talked. I have never got over it. I can talk readily in my class and before any group and in debate (when it is not too exciting), but privately, in a parlor, or in an elevator, I am at a loss to find a word to begin a conversation. Conversation as a social art I do not have. I often feel stupid for the lack, and this does not help."

that there was something you must call God, but they were arguing how to understand it; whether it was an immanent or an eminent God; whether it made the universe; whether or not it was a personality. You recall, there was a time when I had cast out all such supernatural words as soul and God, but now I had to reintegrate these new ideas into my thinking."

Kilpatrick sought out a liberal Baltimore minister, who told him: "I have no advice, except that you keep on thinking; don't stop. Keep on and you'll come out all right."

And think he did, wrestling with what to him, then and now, was a vital and fundamental problem.

His friend, Otis Ashmore, whom he had met and admired at the Georgia summer institute, knew of three or four vacancies for elementary school principal, and he urged Kilpatrick to come to Savannah, promising to aid him in every way.

In Savannah, Kilpatrick discovered that he had a powerful friend at court. Ashmore had been elected superintendent of schools, and in 1896, at the age of twenty-five Kilpatrick became principal of the Anderson elementary school, located in a good middle-class neighborhood. Along with teaching the seventh grade, Kilpatrick supervised nine teachers and between four hundred and five hundred children.

It did not take him long to discover that he headed a formal school. On entering one room he found a teacher calling the roll at the close of the day. The children sang out: "One off, two off, three off."

"What does that mean?" asked Kilpatrick.

"One off," explained the teacher, "means that the children had spoken once during the day; two off, that they had spoken twice."

"You're teaching those children to lie," said Kilpatrick, disheartened. "You're just cultivating lying in them. That thing won't do at all."

His first-grade teacher had fifty-two pupils. "I said, 'Now that's too many. You can't teach that many at once; divide them up into three groups and have "busy" work for those others.' That was a term we used then."

The teacher explained she couldn't do that, the regulations forbade it; she had to teach the whole class as a unit.

Kilpatrick was astonished; he had never heard of such a thing. He inquired, and sure enough, the regulations forbade group teaching. "That just isn't right. You can't run a school on that basis," he told the Board of Education, and the board, there and then, changed this requirement.

"And so with other things. I tried to make my teachers do better. It

was the first- and second-grade teachers who came nearer doing what I wanted of them. The third-grade teacher was not a good teacher, and the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers thought they knew all there was to know about teaching."

In a letter, Miss Lila M. Cabaniss, one of his teachers, described how helpful he was. When she told Kilpatrick she needed a map, he suggested that they make one. He came to her home the following Saturday morning, and she recalls "how intently and seriously we went about it (we were both in our early twenties). The venture was a grand success, and it marked the beginning of many homemade sets."

At the Savannah school he continued his battle against report cards. They would have to go, he insisted; that was essential and fundamental. They pitted children and teacher against each other. The children were thinking how they could make the teacher think they knew the thing without being interested in the thing itself. "Whereas," he said, "I wanted to teach so that they would be interested in the thing itself and not be bothered at all whether they satisfied me or not."

In Savannah the report card was based on the worst psychology imaginable. The approach was negative. If the child had no bad marks, no demerits, he received a blank card, indicating perfection; if he brought home a card with many demerits, it meant that he was doing poorly.

Kilpatrick went to the superintendent and said: "I want you to allow us not to send out any more report cards."

The superintendent told him he couldn't change the regulations for everybody, but—because he had so much confidence in Kilpatrick—he would overlook the regulations for him but not for his other teachers.

• "So I told my pupils that I wasn't going to give them any more report cards. I did send home reports as to whether they had been to school or not, whether they were present, absent or tardy; but I said nothing about how they did in their lessons or about their behavior."

• Asked how he controlled children, he said: "I never punished; I never scolded; I tried to persuade them, help them and understand them."

"Wasn't there disagreeable subject matter that you had to teach and the children had to learn whether they liked it or not?"

"Of course. I still remember the bank discount I had to teach in the seventh grade. The children didn't know a thing about bank discount and they didn't care to know. But there was that superintendent's test, which hurdle the children were required to overcome. I told my children frankly that I was doing my best to prepare them for this test. They at least knew why they were studying this outlandish material, but they

also knew that I was not judging them or marking them; that I was really and wholeheartedly trying to help them; that I was on their side."

"If you abolished the report card and you didn't punish, how could you get discipline?"

"Let me tell you several incidents to illustrate what I mean. In my own classes I found in a short time that some children wanted to talk nearly all the time; and I soon found out who they were. I had all told five rows of seats and thirty-six pupils, seven pupils to each row. That left one chair in front. In this I placed the most talkative child and around him I placed quiet children. I separated all talkers in this way.

"Also, I wanted them to become conscious of the amount of talking they did. I gave them little sheets of paper, say two by four inches, and I said: 'I'm not going to punish you: I want you to keep a record. Every time you talk I want you to write it down—8:30 talked, 9:30 talked, and so on.' We had placed a clock in the front of the room. Some of them thought that was a good joke and said: 'I'll need more than one sheet.' But they got in the habit of watching, and the more they watched the fewer notations they put down. And they told the truth. I discovered that the children had been used to lying because teachers and children were opposed to each other and they were conducting a kind of underhand warfare. I had to develop in them an attitude of telling the truth.

"In a little while there wasn't nearly so much talking as hitherto; in fact, there was hardly any. Of course, they did some talking, but I never objected to a little. Although they had developed self-discipline to a point where they could go about their work quietly, I still had a problem. My assistant was a young, inexperienced teacher, and I had occasion to leave the room, since I was the principal and had to supervise and to administer. When I left the room, the class went wild. And now the question arose as how to manage that. I told this to my class: 'I am going to leave the room. You are going to be on your own; nobody will be here to look after or supervise you. I am going to be out for five minutes. When I return I'm going to ask how many have done what was right. If you haven't done what was right, I'm going to ask you to raise your hands. I'm telling you in advance that I'm not going to punish you in any shape, manner, or form; I'm not going to punish you in any way. I want you to remember that. I just want you to watch. If you haven't done the right thing, I want your hand to come up.' The class thought that was a great joke.

"When I went out, I could hear bedlam breaking loose. I returned in five minutes and said: 'Let's see your hands.' A good many hands went up. One big boy, Jacob Trump, I remember to this day. Jacob had his

hand up, and he saw a boy who hadn't. Jacob said: 'You ought to have your hand up. You talked just as much as the rest of us and you know you did.' That boy looked very sheepish. I said: 'We'll try this tomorrow. And tomorrow we want to be sure that every hand comes up that ought to come up. I want you to watch yourself. If you behave in any way you think isn't just right, I want you to raise your hand.' I didn't say anything else. The next day I went out again for five minutes. We had *less* bedlam and *more* hands. The next day we had more quiet and fewer hands; the next day still more quiet and fewer hands. 'Now,' I told them, 'I'll be out ten minutes.' And, a little while later, I told them: 'I'll be out fifteen minutes.' In the end I could leave the room and they behaved as well as when I was there."

"Isn't it possible," I asked, "that the children might glory in being mischievous, try to excel in disobedience instead of cooperation; in vying with one another in seeing how many regulations they broke? If yes, what procedures would you suggest to a teacher who is confronted by this problem?"

"Well, I would say this: The strongest motivating factor in a human being is a desire for recognition. Other things being equal, they would rather have recognition that brings approval than recognition that doesn't bring approval. If a child can't get recognition for being the best boy in the class, he's apt to try to get recognition for being the worst. The important thing is for the teacher to understand each child, so he can give him recognition for the good things in him; and so to conduct his class that every child has an opportunity to show off those good things which he can and is able to do. I treated those children with a kind of affection. I never scolded them; I never used harshness or reproof. I tried to teach so that the children could get some good out of it and in such a way that they could see they were getting good out of it. I trusted my children. I appealed to the better in them. I respected them as persons and treated them as persons. And there were enough pupils in my class who believed in that sort of thing. Parents came to me and said: 'Our children are now different; they are kindlier, more considerate.' The town and the neighborhood felt this difference. There was considerably less mischief around the neighborhood; gates stayed on better, fewer windows were broken; there was less vandalism. I appealed to the better in the children and I gave them an opportunity to act on that better self and then gave them recognition and approval for such behavior."

"You set no predetermined standards of scholarship and you did not treat those who failed to come up to these standards as derelicts?"

"Nothing like that. I tried to help at the point at which they needed help."

On one occasion, when walking into his room, he found his assistant, in temporary charge, struggling with an uproar. The children were brandishing powerful sticks. "I'm not going to punish you; you need not fear," he told them calmly. "I want you to write down exactly what happened." He then learned that the class had agreed to hide the sticks under their coats and, as soon as Kilpatrick left, to play a game of hockey in the classroom.

"I didn't punish them," he relates. "We just talked—whether what they planned to do was fair or right or manly. They said no. I said: 'If you want to do that again, do it when I'm in the room.' They said: 'Oh, no, you'd see us: you'd know.'"

"Let me give you another illustration. In that town there was a principal, new on the job as I was, only he was a West Pointer. He had the West Point idea of doing things. He commanded and demanded implicit obedience. His school playground was long and narrow; and when he was there supervising, his boys at the other end would shout 'fight, fight, fight.' He would dash there wildly, so as to handle the disturbance, but the children were only fooling him. And then, at the other end, another group would set up a howl, and he'd dash down there. And they kept him running back and forth.

"I too had a school playground, shaped like an L, and I generally sat where I could see only half the yard. Before I can tell you my story, I have to tell you about Sheftall, a fourth- or fifth-grade boy, who was continually reported by teachers for fighting. I didn't scold Sheftall; I said to him: 'Sheftall, what's the matter with you? Why are you fighting all the time?' Sheftall said: 'That boy said he could lick me.' 'That's no reason to fight,' I told him. 'If a man told you he could whip you, wouldn't you fight?' I said no. 'What would you do?' 'I'd look him over, and if he was bigger, I'd say, 'Very likely you can.' ' Sheftall was a little mystified; he said he didn't know about that.

"Now to come back to the playground. While I was sitting in the playground, the children one day began to shout 'fight, fight, fight.' I started to get up, but Sheftall was there, and from the distance, he shook his head and motioned to me to remain seated. Sheftall was on my side; he didn't want me to be fooled. That was the difference between that West Pointer and me: I had my pupils on my side."

Ashmore and Kilpatrick had many novel ideas on education; they were both young, enthusiastic, and idealistic. Kilpatrick talked about Francis Parker, the Grube method, the Quincy method, about newer ways of

teaching. Ashmore asked Kilpatrick to work with the Savannah second- and third-grade teachers and this he did.

As the school year drew to a close, Kilpatrick's nebulous ideas of journeying to Paris for further study of mathematics began to jell. At this juncture he entertained a most welcome visitor, Dr. Pickney Daniel Pollock, president of Mercer University, who told him that the Mercer professor of mathematics and astronomy had resigned and he was looking for a man to fill the post. He had not the slightest doubt about Kilpatrick's scholarship nor his ability, but he had strong doubts and he was deeply concerned about Kilpatrick's religious views, since all sorts of disquieting rumors had got about. Since Mercer was a Baptist institution, he would need to know what Kilpatrick believed before he could feel justified in recommending his candidacy. Kilpatrick spoke to him honestly and frankly. He said that he was once disposed to reject religion altogether, but since his philosophy course at Johns Hopkins—helped along by subsequent thinking—he was turning more and more to a religious point of view. At present he could not accept church ritual or ceremonies; concerning the true essence of religion—a belief in the spiritual nature of man and the universe—he was at present strongly committed.

That explanation apparently satisfied Dr. Pollock; and shortly thereafter (1897) the Mercer Board of Trustees elected Kilpatrick professor of mathematics and astronomy at a salary of \$1,500 a year.

CHAPTER IV

Kilpatrick Returns to Mercer

YOUNG Professor Kilpatrick was soon immersed in his university work with his customary zeal and devotion. At Mercer, bound as it was with close ties of family tradition and history, he was at home. Here he hoped to assume a position of some regard locally and in the state; here he saw an opportunity for unselfish service, so necessary for his happiness.

As already chronicled, Kilpatrick was in the habit of working intimately with an associate, and of all the faculty the man to whom he was most drawn was Professor J. R. Moseley, whom Kilpatrick has described as "the most spiritual man I have ever known." A large number of Mercer graduates went into teaching, but its curriculum did not provide for pedagogical training. Hence, it became a custom for prospective teachers to meet voluntarily Saturday mornings to discuss educational problems. Professor Moseley was in charge; but since he had had no elementary school experience, his interest in this direction was not great. He suggested that Professor Kilpatrick take over this work, to which the latter agreed with alacrity. While leading this group, Professor Kilpatrick deepened and broadened his interest in education. In 1897 he used Herbert Spencer's book on education as his text. In 1899, the year it appeared, he adopted *Talks to Teachers* by William James. The latter book made a lasting impression on him, and he still has his desk copy, carefully marked and annotated; and it still has a place of honor on the bookshelf facing his easy chair, which contains the small number of precious fundamental volumes to which he frequently refers.

Unwittingly, Professor Moseley brought Kilpatrick closer to religion. Moseley was in poor health; and the multitude and the variety of medicines that the doctors prescribed did not improve it. He then became for a limited period deeply interested in Christian Science. Since Mercer was a Baptist institution, Moseley thought that it would embarrass Mercer to harbor a faculty member with such an unconventional interest; and he

insisted on resigning. Since Kilpatrick knew that Moseley was one of the most beloved figures on the campus and that his spiritual influence on the students was for the good, Kilpatrick did everything he could to dissuade him, but his efforts were unavailing. Kilpatrick thereby inherited the Magazine Club, hitherto supervised by Moseley.

As he met with the members, Kilpatrick discovered that they soon wanted "stronger meat"; so the club branched out into a study of Philosophy. As he developed such themes as "Science and Religion," "What Is Christianity?"; as he discussed Plato, Descartes, Hume; as he compared different religions—Buddhism, Brahmanism, Mohammedanism—Kilpatrick's own strongly moral and spiritual views coalesced and took shape; and he found himself in agreement with what he describes as a Neo-Hegelian philosophy. "This philosophy," explains Kilpatrick, "stressed God from a religious, not a theological point of view. It permitted a person to be as strongly religious as he wanted and yet he need not accept church ritual and dogma." Hegel spoke of an expanding, evolving universe, whose nature was fundamentally spiritual, and as a man grew in spirit and understanding, as he evolved spiritually and aesthetically, he was fulfilling the purpose of God and the universe; he was also coming nearer to perfection and nearer to God. What appealed to Kilpatrick was that this philosophy by-passed the organized theology, as such, but placed great emphasis on goodness, morality, ethical and spiritual growth. It also in a spiritual sense paralleled Darwin's theory of evolution in a biological sense.

He now accounted himself a religious man; he was no longer on the outside looking in; he was at one with his environment. He relates that his associates and students took kindly to this new viewpoint.¹ He agreed to teach a Sunday-school class and he became active in college Y.M.C.A. work.

His association with Dr. Pollock, president of the university, was cordial and admiring. They had both been Mercer students, and they were the only two Georgians on the faculty; and they thus felt a special closeness to the students. Increasingly, the president called on Kilpatrick for advice and counsel, delegating to him ever-increasing responsibilities. Increasingly, Kilpatrick took over the management of the internal affairs of the university, while President Pollock devoted himself to outside matters.

¹ John Dewey at one time also emphasized the Neo-Hegelian approach. He was popular and he was invited frequently to lecture. But when Dewey rejected Neo-Hegelianism, Kilpatrick says, he stopped receiving religious lecture engagements, although he felt that he was as religious as he had been hitherto.

Recognizing Professor Kilpatrick's administrative responsibility, the Board of Trustees, on the recommendation of President Pollock, formally elected him vice-president of the University at the age of twenty-nine.

Professor Kilpatrick's mathematics teaching was for him never satisfactory, because through it, as we shall see later, he could not reach his students' deepest selves, their emotional living and their social thinking. To achieve this he reached out in a multitude of other directions—his Magazine Club, his Y.M.C.A. work, his supervision of athletic society activities, his Sunday-school class, the Macon Literary Society, a town forum which invited outside speakers; and still later, a senior discussion group, which met at his home. Such close association with students gave him a great deal of personal satisfaction.

Professor Kilpatrick had in Dr. Pollock a kindred spirit; both loved to work with students and both understood students. Dr. Pollock could draw the best things out of them. During his administration, college pranks and vandalism practically disappeared. He trusted students to reach right decisions; and they generally did.

On one occasion, a traveling troupe of actors visited Macon, and it was bruited about that the students intended to cut classes to attend a matinee performance. Dr. Pollock called the students together and told them that he knew how they felt; that he sympathized with them. At the same time he reminded them that Mercer was a Baptist institution, and their going would cast discredit on Mercer and alienate generous supporters. "If you still feel you should go," he told them, "then you go; I shall not hold you back." On the appointed day the students were in their appointed classes.

Those early days at Mercer were rewarding and happy ones for Kilpatrick. He glowed, and he gloried in activity; his zest for work and more work was insatiable. The thought of the years of rich, purposeful activity ahead filled him with contentment.

President Pollock had appointed him as the Mercer representative to the Southern Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, and this opened before him the whole problem of college administration. He began to study the works of President Eliot of Harvard, an eminent figure in this field, and also the reports and writings of Nicholas Murray Butler, who had been recently elected president of Columbia University. He relates that while on a visit to the University of South Carolina he "stood and looked at the buildings, a very attractive sight, a premonition came to me that I would be president of that institution some day."

That now was his goal—to become the head of a university.

In the summer of 1898 he attended the University of Chicago summer school, then "the only summer school worth going to." He took two

courses, one in education under John Dewey and another in mathematics. Dewey was not widely known, but he had already published *Interest as Related to the Will* and *My Educational Creed*, and he was in the process of acquiring a favorable reputation in certain circles.

Kilpatrick's course in education proved a failure. He still does not know whether to attribute this failure to his own inadequate background or to Dewey's poor teaching. "As I heard Dewey lecture," he says, "I thought of him as a very capable man. I honored and respected him, but I failed to get from him the kind of leadership in thinking that I wished. Professor Dewey is not a good lecturer, and he does not always prepare the ground, so that a newcomer can follow him."

His second course proved more successful. "I left," he says, "very much interested in math. At my request, the instructor gave me a problem to take home with me. As I worked at it I began to doubt that I had the superior ability or intellect in math that I had previously thought."

In 1900 both Columbia and Cornell organized summer sessions for the first time. Kilpatrick debated with himself which school to attend. Cornell won out, because Kilpatrick thought Ithaca had a more pleasant climate. He took two courses that summer, one in math and another in education.

The math course turned out to be "as complete a flop as anything that has ever happened to me," he relates. "That math teacher was the worst, I believe, I ever saw. If I studied hard and if I encountered difficulty, why, after his explanation, it got more obscure."

He was, however, charmed and delighted with Professor Charles De Garmo, who used as his text, *Education as Related to the Will*, later to become *Interest and Effort*. "This book opened up a whole new world to me, as no book ever before. No other book had ever meant as much to me. I was stirred and moved. It coalesced all my feelings and aspirations; it showed me that there was no conflict between interest and effort; that they were not divergent forces but that they were inextricably allied; that effort follows interest. In other words, the more an individual becomes interested in something the more effort he will put into it. Hence, the starting point in all education—the crux of the educational process—is individual interest; further, that the best and the richest kind of education starts with this self-propelled interest."

He saw clearly now that interests grow and expand; that as an individual works at his interest he becomes interested not only in his original objective, but in the means as well, in all the associated procedures, skills, and knowledges necessary to achieve his end. A painter, whose end object is a picture on a canvas, becomes interested not only in canvases, but in easels, in art exhibits, in paints, in the chemistry of color

mixing, in light and shade, in other painters, in subjects for painting, etc. The writer does not limit his interest to paper, pen, and the ideas he is setting down, but he becomes interested in all the procedures, skills, knowledges, that he thinks necessary and important for his work, including books, travel, people, other writers, encyclopedias, dictionaries, grammar, libraries, in subject matter for his writing, which involves him in new chains of interests, and so on endlessly.

And Kilpatrick saw that these interests—and the myriads of derived interests—were the best source for fruitful and meaningful learnings. This concept was to dominate his thinking and to influence his educational philosophy, and to serve as a base for many fundamental contributions to education, contributions which were to change radically and drastically both theory and practice.

While visiting her uncle, Olin Wimberly, an attorney, Miss Marie Beman Guyton met Kilpatrick, who was boarding with the Wimberly family. They saw a great deal of each other, and Kilpatrick was taken with her. That summer he went to Marianna, Florida, where Miss Guyton lived, and courted her. The couple were married during the Christmas holiday of 1898 in the bride's home town, and then they went to Macon to live. The couple had three children, the eldest, Margaret, and two other children who died in early infancy. Margaret is the wife of Professor Theodore Baumeister, head of the mechanical engineering department of Columbia University.²

The young professor was a doting father and a gentle, devoted, and loving husband. Associates still talk of how kind and considerate he was of his wife. Marie was a small, dainty, sweet person, who made friends easily.

There were many occasions when he had to be away from home; at summer institutes, association meetings, educational conferences; and these separations were hard for him, for he missed his family terribly. On such occasions he would plead with Marie: "Talk to the baby about me, make her call my name." And for her entertainment, he would draw cute pictures of baby carriages, spoons, a clock, a horse, houses, a girl sewing under a tree. "I am so anxious to be again with my wife and child," he wrote. "I feel as if I am not living in any sense so far away

² Professor and Mrs. Baumeister have three children, two sons and a daughter. At this writing, the eldest, Theodore III, born February 1, 1926, a graduate of Yale University, is working as an engineer in New York City; the second, Heard Kilpatrick, born January 20, 1929, is a student in the School of Engineering, Columbia University, and the third, Mary Berrien, born May 15, 1943, has just entered school.

from you. After one has known what it means to enjoy the pleasure of living with such a wife as I have, he is not willing to be absent from her."

Although gentle in manner and altogether a devoted husband, he had one weakness: it was not drink, or gambling, or sexual deviation; it was work. In a way that a drug possesses an individual work possessed Kilpatrick. It is impossible to put into words with what passion and whole-hearted devotion, with what consuming energy, like a burning fire, Kilpatrick immersed himself in his studies, in his classes, in university administration, in his students. In his more reflective moments he constantly reprimanded himself for not being more thoughtful, for not giving more of his time and attention to his wife and child and to visiting members of his family. This struggle—work versus family—plagued him during his entire life. The sense of guilt was especially strong when he was away from home. While attending a summer school at Knoxville, he wrote (August 9, 1903) his wife:

Many contending emotions have arisen. I have felt at times like giving up the struggle; for somehow it all seems part of one great struggle. I could be like Professor M—— and give you and the baby³ all of my time except what went on in the preparation of my class work. And as I have already so familiarized myself with the ground in mathematics, the work outside my classroom would be slight. But I cannot bring myself to believe that thus to shirk would bring happiness to either of us. I certainly would miss the satisfaction that comes from work; for satisfaction to me really lies outside this narrow path of schoolroom mathematics, and I cannot believe that my loss of satisfaction and the concomitant loss of preferment—for the withdrawal from outside work would cause both—would bring the most satisfaction to us.

• It occurs to me, as I think over it, that the most satisfaction possible to a woman lies along three lines: 1) in the consciousness of being loved by her husband; 2) in the consciousness of loving her offspring and caring for them; and 3) in the consciousness of the success that her husband is having in his plans and the part she is playing in encouraging him in this success.

• The first is a consciousness of passive pleasure, that is, she is the recipient rather than the actor. And this passivity, this reciprocity—the essential element in courtship in all its forms, in lower animals as well as in man—is the central feature, the essential element. For this cause a woman dresses; for this cause she desires beauty. From this point of view, she is egoistic.

The other two are altruistic, as opposed to egoistic. They are both active as opposed to passive. She does something: in the second, the maternal love exerts a powerful influence to make the mother care for the welfare of the child, activity is essential. This capacity for satisfaction she has in common with most of the lower animal world.

³ This refers to his daughter, Margaret.

In the third—the highest point of civilization is reached—that too is not a feeling held in common with lower animals. It is essentially a social element and arises from sympathy. It is essentially unselfish and is the mother love. But it is not so deeply implanted in the race, and is seen in best form only in the highest products of our social life.

Thus to apply this discussion to the case on hand: I have failed to satisfy the first need. When we have been together, I have said too little about liking your looks, your dress, etc. [Henceforth, he promises to overcome this lack; to send her fuller and more intimate and personal letters.]

The second need has been met in part; but even here there has been some lack. The loss of our baby has left a gap which has not been filled.⁴

The third, you have come to appreciate much more than at first. But unfortunately your lot is the only too common lot of women. They must be the idle spectators of their husbands' efforts. I don't mean that you have been idle or that you have not helped me: but it certainly is true that your labors have mostly been the indirect help of saving money.

Unfortunately, Marie was to see few of these dreams realized, for tragedy stalked the marriage. Always delicate in health, Marie early contracted tuberculosis, from which she was to suffer much and to die young.

As a teacher, Kilpatrick approached the classroom humbly and dedicated, somewhat like a devoutly religious man coming to an altar of worship. Each classroom session was for him a challenge and an opportunity, and he appraised each performance with the exacting standards of an artist. He was severe with himself, never satisfied, always experimenting with new methodology. To him, a teaching period was never a routine assignment: it had in it all the elements of adventure, tension, and concern that a writer experiences when he undertakes a new work, or a painter when he begins a new picture, or a composer when he starts on a new score.

It is a habit, common among teachers, to explain a poor class by blaming the students—they are lazy or stupid; or students today are not what they used to be. Professor Kilpatrick *always* blamed himself, *never* his students. His diary is replete with self-incriminations; and the phrase "I am sick at heart" recurs again and again. Several excerpts from it follow:

The trigonometry exam was excellent . . . but in disclosing weaknesses of students, I disclosed my weakness as a teacher.

⁴The death refers to the first son, William Heard, who died a few days after birth.

Quiz in sophomore algebra; and again I make it too hard though not intending to do so. I must guard myself against this. Encouragement is one of the most powerful aids to progress. Possible improvement is more powerful than fear of failure.

I must learn not to talk in my trig class.

After supper I discussed Mohammedanism with my boys. I must do better than this next time.

An unsatisfactory psychology lesson; I have not learned to get good work from my students. My geometry work is better. I see I must give more liberty of recitation to students. I can make more time by not interrupting so much . . . Am tempted to talk too much.

"Little Kil," as he was affectionately known to students, became a legend on the Mercer campus. Students, now elderly after almost a half century; still write to him, couching their letters in adolescent superlatives, telling him how much he has meant to them; how he has permanently enriched and ennobled their lives.

Dr. W. C. Jackson, recently retired as chancellor of the Women's College of the University of North Carolina, talks of entering Kilpatrick's class with an inferiority complex. His high school preparation in math had been nil and his previous college instruction had only served to confuse him. Attending Kilpatrick's class for the first session, sitting at the back of the room, he felt lonely and timid. Kilpatrick had called on several students to solve a problem, but thus far without any success. Chancellor Jackson writes:

I finally summoned up enough courage to volunteer. I went to the board and gave the proper demonstration. I have never been able to recall the words that Dr. Kilpatrick spoke to me at the moment, but his manner and words, whatever they were, were such as to release something within me that was significant for the rest of my life. . . . That semester I worked as I had never dreamed of working before, although I had always worked hard enough, I thought. I would have given my life before I would have let Kilpatrick down.

It is difficult to fix and identify what Kilpatrick did that could stir young people, but he aroused in them a spiritual hunger and a desire to live up to their highest as no other person could.

Dr. J. W. Norman, dean emeritus of the University of Florida, says of him: "I am myself up in years . . . I have passed my sixty-fourth birthday. And even yet when I go to New York to see Dr. Kilpatrick, there is an exhilaration about it that I get from no other experience that I have. He has always had this influence upon me."

Says Professor Solon B. Cousins, chairman of the department of religion of the University of Richmond: "He made us discontented with what we knew and what we were. Without word-prodding, he gave us the urge to go on, to learn more, to do better and to be better."

This warm, soul-stirring relationship with students did not result from the subject matter he taught. It developed because Kilpatrick was ever ready to give of himself unstintingly to students, to instill in them a desire to live good, useful, spiritual lives. In his diary he recorded (he was then receiving \$1,500 a year and had a child, and a wife who was already suffering from tuberculosis): "I buy candies, cakes, apples, bananas, etc., for a little spread in my room for the college boys who remained for the [Christmas] holidays . . . I appeal to them to take a deeper interest in a personal philosophy, a more intense interest in thought problems."

On the Mercer campus it became known that anyone who had a problem—moral, social, political, or even financial—could go to him for help: his door was always open. He was regarded as a "walking intellect."⁵ One student, vastly troubled because he had lost faith through his study of science, went from faculty member to faculty member, but all they told him, relates R. W. Edenfield, a college classmate of the young man, was "I am very sorry." A number of students went to Professor Kilpatrick, who told them: "Bring John to me when I have no class." Says Mr. Edenfield: "John was there and he straightened him out. Dr. Kilpatrick knew how to handle boys. He usually knew their problems and what they needed."

The Mercer students were poor boys and money was scarce, and many found themselves in financial need for legitimate reasons: to travel to a job, attend summer school, establish themselves in a new community, etc. To them all he opened his purse.

Professor Kilpatrick loved to teach, but he was not happy teaching his subject. Mathematics, he pointed out, is a closed system. The deeper an instructor probes the subject the further behind he leaves his students; the less close he is to his students and their needs. One hour of original math thinking on the instructor's part might equal for students enough work for a semester. Further, he had begun to doubt the theory of formal discipline, namely, that the study of mathematics trained the mind, making it a sharper and better instrument in solving practical life situations. But most of all, he wanted to be close to his students—in their emotional,

⁵ This phrase was supplied by Dr. William F. Ogburn, his former student and now professor of sociology at Chicago University. When Dr. Ogburn was graduated from Mercer, Professor Kilpatrick obtained for him his first teaching position, as he did for three-quarters of the other Mercer graduates.

social, and attitudinal thinking and living—and mathematics, he felt, provided a weak and tottering bridge for such communication.

"Professors of math, as they continue teaching the same subject matter year after year," Professor Kilpatrick explained, "find it difficult to maintain their interest. For that reason, I branched out into education, administration, and later into ethics and educational psychology."

In his work as a mathematics professor he tried to apply Dewey's concept of what is good education. He tried "to get the students in" on what went on in the classroom. With their help, he laid out a plan of work and of periodic quizzes. He discarded daily marks and routine checkups; and he allowed students democratically to decide on procedure and methodology. "I sought to help students jump over the prearranged hurdles," he explained. As he increased student responsibility and placed more reliance on democratic planning he found that the students became more interested, participated more actively, and acquired richer and better learnings.

"I don't altogether approve now," he frankly admits, "of that kind of teaching. I did not then see and I do not now see how we can teach traditional math in conformity with a modern philosophy of education."

As he thought more about interest as related to effort, he began to perceive more clearly the fundamental fallacy of generally prevailing theory and practice. "In teaching math, I started out with what I wanted my students to master; in other words, I was trying to project my knowledge, my wishes, and my interests on them. I began to perceive that if we wanted rich, meaningful learnings we must start with the student's present knowledge, wishes and interests, whatever they may be and wherever they may lead. This shifted my viewpoint radically. I was dimly beginning to perceive that the fundamental error of our school systems was that they first chose things that the teachers and the school thought important and then compelled students to master that material. They began at the wrong place; they began with fixed and set subject matter, when they should have begun with the student's present interests, purposes, abilities, and needs."

The Rockefeller Foundation became interested to the extent of a million-dollar contribution for the improvement of education in the South. In furtherance of this purpose, a summer school for teachers was organized at Knoxville. Both President Pollock and Professor Kilpatrick became enthusiastic supporters of this venture, and they recruited 162 Georgians as students. The Georgia contingent, gathering at Mercer

University, left for Knoxville in a special train and for dormitory quarters especially reserved for them.

The Summer School of the South—its official name—figured importantly in the development of Professor Kilpatrick, for here he met educational leaders of national reputation, first-rate men of real stature; here he made lasting and influential friends; here he saw a vision of larger and better things. In intimate and revealing letters to Marie, his wife, he recounts the impact on him of this new and enlarged world.

Two men particularly impressed him. One was Professor Wyckliffe Rose, then at Peabody College and later to be prominently associated with the General Education Board. Acknowledging Professor Rose to be a "master teacher," he wrote to Marie concerning him: "Dr. Rose follows something of the same line as De Garmo . . . very good, in many parts better. I was charmed with him; and the interest did not flag, but rather increased to the end."

But it was G. Stanley Hall, the famed psychologist, who "has stirred me much in many matters."

Kilpatrick planned to have Mercer University subscribe to Hall's journal, "in which there is a great deal of [useful] material." He planned to read "James' larger work—the best in this country" aloud to his wife. He planned to make scientific studies of his daughter, Margaret, and of his expected child. "I have received a new impulse to study her [Margaret]. I want us to keep a diary of her and the other baby that is to be,⁶ and put down various records of her development."

To Marie he confided fully and unreservedly his plans, his ambitions, and his hopes. He wrote:

I am enjoying a feast of good things with Dr. G. Stanley Hall. He is very good, very suggestive, very corroborative; for much that he says I have been believing and preaching. I believe that my general attitude towards psychology, pedagogy and religion is nearly up-to-date. I am learning, but it is a satisfaction to feel that I am already prepared by my own reading and thinking for most that is being said.

I am a little disappointed in respect to one thing: I don't have quite the opportunity to mingle with the greater men—the invited lecturers. I am too young, too inconsequential looking. I am in no position [officially] above the 1,804 other enrolled students. But I suppose I must bide my time. I am just beginning, in a sense, but I am not ashamed to measure up to the vast majority of the men here, be they members of the faculty or lecturers brought here. Of the faculty, Dabney is larger physically, but in no other respect, so far as I can see: Claxton⁷ is somewhat more versatile apparently, certainly

⁶ The child was born in January, 1903, and died several days later.

⁷ Philander P. Claxton, later to become United States commissioner of education.

in matters pertaining to the public school (I have had four years' experience in it, he sixteen), but in executive ability, I do not yield; the mathematics teacher in the summer school and in the University of Tennessee is to all appearances inferior to me in every respect except height and weight; there are various instructors here that I know must be inferior; I hear well of some that I do not know much about; Dr. Smith in English is superior to me in literary attainment, but in general information and quickness, in educational and other thought I do not yield to him; Dr. Rose seemed to surpass me in my own line except in executive ability in which I am much superior. Dr. G. Stanley Hall is clearly superior in nearly all essential respects, except probably in executive ability. He is world famous in his line, but I am not so certain that more favorable environment might not have done approximately as much for me. But there's the rub, he is in spite of environment; I am not because of environment. I seem to lack something of being really great; I have many of the factors, but there is one essential I think I lacked. I did not see soon enough and clearly enough wherein lay my possibilities, quite likely I do not yet. I am a little vacillating.

He groped and sought for a lifework, something into which he could pour his energies; he admitted he should like to achieve position and power. He played with the thought that perhaps education and psychology might provide this vehicle, for in Georgia they were both comparatively new fields. "I can teach math," he wrote, "but there is no soul growth in it for me. In education, there is more opportunity 1) for social growth; individual improvement; 2) for influencing students in a very vital way; 3) for influencing Georgia education."

Again his dream of a university presidency came to the fore: "... Almost every school in the South has changed presidents in ten years, the majority in five or six. My time may come; who knows? ..."

He made elaborate plans for self-improvement and further study: "I am mindful that it means hard work; it means fixedness of purpose; it means a subordination of momentary inclinations. You must help me ... your support and encouragement will keep me fixed when otherwise I shall vacillate."

Mr. Claxton, executive secretary of the summer school, talks to him "of a great school in Sweden where there are no fees and board can be had for \$12 a month." In another letter, Kilpatrick painted a rose-petaled picture of what three years at Oxford University might mean. It would provide a "wealth of experience" that would prove "very valuable" for both. "I see no reason why we could not keep a small house and save some of our money. English servants are very cheap, clothes are cheap, food except meat is much as it is here ... certainly [there would] be

libraries and art galleries to which you would have access. The architecture and all the Oxford atmosphere would certainly have an uplifting effect. In case of illness we would certainly have at the university the best of hospital advantages."

He reassured Marie, however, that he was not "wedded" to the idea of studying abroad. "... I feel, somehow, the thrill of life and whether I go abroad or stay here, whether I study further at the universities or confine myself to my own efforts, whether I become more learned or remain much as I am—I am determined to make more of my life and I am sure that I can do so."

He related what in retrospect proved a portentous and fateful interview. Dr. Cloyd of the General Education Board approached him and asked many personal questions, "particularly how I would like to go to Teachers College on a fellowship . . . There is much going to be done in . . . education and I believe that I shall have an opportunity to have a hand in it. I must prepare for a place that no one else can fill so well. That is my duty now." Concerning his European air castles, he wrote: "I am almost afraid to leave America now that so much is about to happen."

Dr. Cloyd's suggestion appealed to him strongly. He definitely committed himself to attend Teachers College in the fall of 1903, and he planned afterward to return to Mercer University to organize a department of education.

Man proposes; time and events dispose. The Teachers College fellowship to which Kilpatrick looked forward became part of a glimmering past. President Pollock contracted pernicious anemia and Professor Kilpatrick took over his duties on what appeared to be a temporary basis. With time, however, Dr. Pollock's condition became graver, and it appeared that his illness would be protracted and he might never be able to return.

On Professor Kilpatrick devolved the duty of running the university. And the first and biggest problem of the acting president was to recruit a new freshman class. Mercer was now practically altogether dependent on student fees for its maintenance. Hence, the crucial test for any Mercer president was whether he could recruit a sufficiently large tuition-paying student body.

Kilpatrick first established his wife comfortably in his father's home at White Plains; Marie had already developed symptoms of tuberculosis, and Kilpatrick wanted to spare her the discomfort of the insufferable

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Macon summer weather. He then returned to Mercer for the most grueling work of his life.

In his campaign for students, Professor Kilpatrick had assigned to each member of the faculty, before they dispersed for their summer holiday, prospective students to interview personally; he had also enlisted the aid of alumni, Baptist ministers, personal friends—anyone who might have influence with young people. To his wife he wrote: "Cultivate all the young people . . . You might get me three or four boys." He himself worked mercilessly and unendingly. "I found myself getting tense," he said, "and I decided that that wouldn't do. So I began to practice relaxing; I'd stop work for a few minutes, relax my tense muscles and then go back to work."

In detailing the progress of the campaign, he wrote to Marie: ". . . I feel much encouraged. Last year Dr. Pollock had, so far as I can ascertain, some 300 men on the list with 99 who said they would come. I have about 550 to 600 on my list with about 75 who say already they will come. I have not yet written to more than half of my list. So while I must not count my chickens too soon, I am much encouraged over the situation. I certainly hope I will succeed. It would be such a satisfaction to me to have more men enrolled next year than ever before. I hardly allow myself to hope that, and yet it comes up again and again."

He worked indefatigably in the hot summer weather of Macon, returning to his office at night after a hurried supper to mimeograph material, answer correspondents, read reports until the wee hours; finally, to fall exhausted on the office cot for a few fitful hours of sleep.

The campaign for students was eminently successful, and Mercer University opened in the fall of 1903 with probably the largest enrollment in its history. Kilpatrick now felt he had overcome the pivotal hurdle; he had proved himself. "I had made my success," he says simply.

When it became apparent that Dr. Pollock was suffering from a prolonged and serious malady, the Board of Trustees in 1904 formally conferred on Professor Kilpatrick the title of acting president.

For a university president, he was young in years, thirty-three, but he looked years younger. Slight in stature, weighing some 110 pounds, with clear blue eyes, topped by a silky shock of light-brown hair, he could have been mistaken on the campus for a sophomore. His appointment proved popular with students and alumni. Always shy, rather withdrawing, not talkative, Kilpatrick had a powerful hold on students. They knew that his door was always open to them and that in him they had a friend, who would help them with deeds—whether it concerned money or a job or personal intercession—and that nothing was too hard for him

when the request was legitimate. Students came to him in great numbers, for not only did they know that he was willing to help, but they also discovered that he was wise and knowing, a veritable "walking encyclopedia."

He was a university president. But he was not to be happy for long. The horizon was destined to darken soon and the trouble arose, strange as it may seem, because he continued, as a university president, to remain close to students, to keep an open door. Although his relationship with students and alumni was always cordial, his faculty became difficult. He is frank enough now to admit that he didn't handle them as he should, and that if the same situation were repeated he would act differently.

"I was younger than any of the rest of the faculty," he says. "They had been there longer. I didn't tell them everything I knew. They'd get to debating in faculty meetings about what ought to be done. After a while, I'd say, 'Now, you don't understand the situation.' Students would come and tell me everything—both sides; so I understood the whole business. That rather irritated them."

Why did he withhold this information? "I was always hoping that the faculty would come to a right decision and I disliked influencing them."

As he began to ponder the financial situation—that the university needed generous supporters and a more adequate endowment—he came to what was for him a soul-racking decision, namely, that he was not the right man for the job. The position needed a man with authority and prestige among Georgia Baptists, one who could go before audiences and arouse and stir them. He was too young, and, more important, he doubted whether he could make the necessary strong emotional appeals. To his mother he wrote: ". . . When I have grown older, have become better known, have more friends, have wider experience with affairs, look older—then it will be time for me to consider working along these lines."

He was now determined not to make a move until he had informed the faculty, and at one of the faculty meetings he told them of his decision. He intended, he said, to ask the Board of Trustees to find another man to fill his post.

To Marie, he wrote: "I am profoundly glad . . . that I am determined not to wish to succeed him [Dr. Pollock]. It puts me in a better relationship with everybody! The faculty have all had a different attitude towards me ever since my announcement; I can now discuss the situation with the trustees. But above all, however, is the fact that I am on better terms with myself, more at peace, am not torn with fears or selfish doubts or wishes. I am all unselfish, as far as I can control myself. I am coming to

understand some things of religion that I did not know about. The joy of losing oneself is worth all. The peace that comes from wishing the good of the highest cause irrespective of the bearing upon one's individual self has come nearer to me."

The trustees soon thereafter chose Dr. Charles Lee Smith, who had recently resigned as president of William Jewell College, as the new president of Mercer University.

CHAPTER V

The Heresy Charge

AS ALREADY pointed out, Kilpatrick "looked upon God as the spirit of goodness, and on religion as the unification of the spirit of man with this all-inclusive spirit of goodness." But he had come to reject the traditional religious dogma, theology, and ritual. For a man like Kilpatrick to think was to speak and to act; it would have been almost impossible for him to think one way and speak another way; he could not hide or equivocate concerning his beliefs. And religion was a crucial subject in those days, especially at Mercer.

"I get into a discussion with Col. Harris on religious and theological topics," he noted in his diary, "in which I endeavor to show Col. Harris that he does not believe the book from cover to cover." He met the local fundamentalist Baptist minister, and he said casually, without thinking of the implications, that he could not accept the dogma of the Virgin Birth.

A story began to circulate—growing on itself and improving with each telling—of a Mercer professor, this Kilpatrick, young and smart, who was a nonbeliever and an atheist, and right in the Baptist citadel of learning! It unsettled and worried the good people of Georgia, with whom religion was a strong passion. For them it meant not only salvation and heaven, but it was an absolute, a sacred fundamental that explained the why of life and furnished the core and the root of their philosophy and thinking.

The full role played by the new president of Mercer University in this connection cannot be told; it would redound to the hurt of living persons. But it can be said that the new president was antagonistic to Professor Kilpatrick from the day of his inauguration. He had heard disquieting stories about that young "whippersnapper" Kilpatrick and the local Baptist minister, a strong fundamentalist, had warned him: "You think you're going to be president of Mercer. You won't be. It's that young Kilpatrick there; he'll run Mercer." Also, he heard of opposition

from professors, who resented Kilpatrick's strong hold on students; they said it wasn't fair or right for a professor to build up a personal following. So from the beginning the new president's opposition was open and obvious. As he went about the state lecturing and meeting groups informally, he allowed doubts to grow.

Kilpatrick sought out Dr. Forrester, the Mercer professor of religion, and frankly and fully told him what he believed and what he did not believe. Dr. Forrester said that, although he himself did not agree with Kilpatrick, there was no real basis for criticism. "He stood by me," Kilpatrick recalls, "straight up to the end. Although the fundamentalists did not like to admit it, there was no really orthodox man on the whole faculty."

Several seniors at this time asked him to form a philosophical discussion group, and he agreed, although he confides in his diary that he is "running some danger from heresy hunters." Dr. William F. Ogburn, now professor at the University of Chicago, in talking of this group "which met in his [Professor Kilpatrick's] quarters in the evening," says, "To be able to attend this class was the highest desideratum of any intellectual on the campus. We felt this was a special privilege reserved for the best." And to this day students, now old and gray, talk nostalgically of those memorable evenings when they and Kilpatrick together discussed the why and the wherefore of life.

A member of this group, Dr. Solon B. Cousins, later professor of religion at the University of Richmond, writes as follows: "... He led the discussion usually on some religious topic. I remember the evening when we raised the question: 'What constitutes a religious experience?' We read selections from the founders of the different religions. I have long been fascinated by the character of Buddha. I met him there one Saturday night. And the first book I bought on Christianity was by Harnack. Dr. Kilpatrick read us the chapter on 'The Kingdom of God.' I learned for the first time about the Johannine problem. I never had a course in religion (and I have had many, many) which so quickened my thinking and so whetted my appetite for more knowledge about religion and religions."

Only one who has been at the vortex of a religious controversy can know how strong, how unreasoning, how passionate become the emotions of human beings; how they act as if the very core of their living and being stand in jeopardy. In the name of religion, men have destroyed, plundered, tortured, and killed, and they have done this without any of the pangs of a guilty conscience. Indeed, in the midst of their ungodly

cruelty they have felt noble and virtuous in the belief that they were doing God's work.

Once a witch hunt has been initiated, it is difficult to stop its course, for the mob is never happy until it has caught and destroyed its victim.

Kilpatrick heard of a group of students at the Y.M.C.A. who planned to denounce him as an "emissary of hell." He received a letter, asking him whether he believed in the deity of Christ; whether he believed that Christ's death was not an expression of divine love; whether his death did not appease divine wrath and satisfy divine justice. Perplexed, Kilpatrick admitted, "I am in a strait." He consulted Dr. Forrester, who advised him to answer in such a way as to permit him to remain at Mercer. "I feel like leaving, for I am sick of such an atmosphere of heresy hunting."

Dr. Forrester himself received an ugly letter from an alumnus, advising that he would "not raise another cent for Mercer until the faculty and library will be purged of infidelity."

Even Kilpatrick's selected senior group who met with him for discussions on morals, ethics, and religion became the target of gossip, innuendo, and wild tales. Not ventilated by fact or truth, the stories became bizarre, filled with mystery and evil. The students met in the secrecy of night, the stories went, and Kilpatrick inoculated them with heresy, caused them to become skeptical of the divinity of Jesus and destroyed their religious faith. The Board of Trustees attempted to get evidence to substantiate these charges, but none was forthcoming.

As these rumblings became more ominous, Kilpatrick decided to make a frontal attack. He arranged to meet three prominent Mercer trustees in Atlanta: the Reverend W. W. Landrum, who had previously rejected the presidency; the Reverend T. P. Bell, editor of the influential *Christian Index*; and the Reverend S. Y. Jameson, the powerful missionary secretary of the state Baptists.

He told them exactly what he believed, theologically and otherwise, and then said: "I want your advice. I don't want to harm Mercer; I've put too much of myself into it. If you think it best, I'll resign."

He says of that interview: "They listened to me and they talked back and forth, but they had no advice to give me; they didn't seem to know what to do. So I returned to Mercer—no further toward a solution of my difficulty than when I had left. This interview occurred about two months before commencement."

At commencement, when the trustees met, Kilpatrick sought out Dr. Jameson and again asked whether or not he should resign. This time Dr.

Jameson suggested that he hand in his resignation and then allow the board to take such action as it thought fit. Kilpatrick acted accordingly.

"I was hoping that the trustees would not accept the resignation," says Kilpatrick. Personally, he was not too much concerned. A victim of witch hunting, he was not certain that he wanted to remain at Mercer. He was, however, vitally concerned and emotionally stirred in the outcome of his fight for ideological vindication. He took his stand—not to protect his job—but because he hoped that a successful outcome might deal a grievous and perhaps fatal blow to reactionary fundamentalism; that it might help to free Mercer of the constricting shackles of blind orthodoxy and thus push it ahead to more progressive and enlightened thinking and acting.

As the Board of Trustees deliberated over his resignation, it appeared that the sentiment was strong for him, and the trustees appeared ready to vindicate him. They had called the accused before them; and in answer to their charges, Kilpatrick quoted Biblical passages to confirm his position; and his knowledge of the Bible was thorough and expert. The local Baptist minister, a stanch fundamentalist, was not satisfied. He remembered in the course of a conversation with him Kilpatrick had remarked concerning the Virgin Birth: "I gave that business up a long time ago." Several others were troubled when they heard that; in fact, they threatened to make an issue of this before the Georgia Baptist convention if Kilpatrick was retained. In view of such threats, the trustees, for the good of both Mercer and Kilpatrick, thought it best to accept the resignation.

Many years later, when he was eighty years old, Dr. P. A. Jessup, one of the judges at the trial, provided an eyewitness impression of what happened:¹ "I sat at Kilpatrick's trial for three days. We had him before us for a whole day; never in my life have I been in a class where I heard such good theology. He spoke honestly and frankly. I have never seen a man so completely confuse, confound and astound the judges, particularly in his discussion on the divinity of Jesus. For thirty minutes he quoted strong Scripture upholding one side and then took thirty minutes quoting Scripture on the other side. It was better than being in a theological seminary. Concluding, Kilpatrick said: 'Gentlemen, I must be honest and tell you that I don't know what the answer is.' That left us troubled and perturbed. We didn't know what to do: we really felt we could find no fault with him."

¹ I am indebted to Dr. Guy H. Wells, president of the Georgia State College for Women, for this account. Dr. Wells, who was superintendent of schools of Eastman, Ga., was boarding with Dr. Jessup when the latter told him the story.

James Kilpatrick, Heard's father, had excused himself from the proceedings. The judges decided to call on him for counsel, and they explained their predicament. Dr. Jessup remembers what Dr. James Kilpatrick said: "I love my son, Heard, more than anything, excepting the Kingdom of Heaven. First, do what you think best for the Kingdom of Heaven, and second, for Heard."

Continues Dr. Jessup: "With tears in our eyes, we made up our minds to let Kilpatrick go. But we knew he was a remarkable man."

That night, while the board was meeting, Kilpatrick was engaged in his favorite pursuit—meeting with his beloved students. "Marie is quite nervous," he noted in his diary, "and breaks down crying hysterically when certain boys stay so long as to keep me away from her. I am very sorry for her; I know the strain is too trying . . . About 9 p.m. a friend called up to say that the trustees accepted my resignation. I tell Marie to go to bed; I myself am nervous, sore at heart, although not rebellious."

Under the headline "Rumor Was the Basis for the Charges," the *Atlanta Constitution* of June 8, 1906, reported on the Kilpatrick heresy ousting in part as follows:

Several members of the board today declare that in the efforts which were made to arrive at the truth not a single student who was called in was able to single out a definite instance and make a specific charge against the man whose theology was questioned. All of them said they had heard things, but could make no charges. Among the reports which went to the members was a statement that Vice-President Kilpatrick had denied the virgin birth of Christ and had used infidel productions in his course in philosophy. All these assertions, it is alleged, were run down and found to be rumor. It is further alleged that these rumors were reported by students who had failed to make the required marks in the course in philosophy and had failed to grasp the course sufficiently to make actual declarations of the real principles involved.

The ordeal was over. If the fight had been personal, Kilpatrick might have experienced tensions, frustrations, and uneasiness. He had championed a cause, not for his own aggrandizement but for what he thought was the good of Mercer. He felt that enlightenment and progress were on his side, and he was sure that time would vindicate him. He was physically tired and he was somewhat sad, not for himself but for his lost cause. He felt that he would have no difficulty in finding another job. Had he not become known throughout the state as an able, liberal, forward-looking educator and administrator? And now in his adversity he felt the sweetness of the support of those close to him. The faculty rallied around him, as did the overwhelming number—at least nine-tenths—of both students and alumni, as well as at least three-quarters of the trustees.

For a modern heretic, he suffered none of the customary hate, violence, and pillorying.

In a letter recommending the "heretic" to Otis Ashmore, Kilpatrick's old friend to whom the latter had appealed for help, eight Mercer faculty members wrote:

"We know him to be a man of extraordinary ability as a scholar, teacher, and executive . . . he is a teacher of unusual ability to inspire them [students] with a love of knowledge and with the highest ideals of life. . . . His influence for good as a teacher upon the Mercer students has been remarkable."

Yet as Professor Kilpatrick looks back he still feels aggrieved at the unjust accusation and unjust condemnation. At the time he was tried he was truly a religious man, in the best sense of the word. In fact, he says that at Union Theological Seminary his religious views would have represented a middle position, with many of the more "left" members of the faculty accounting him a theological mossback and conservative.

As he prepared to leave Macon, a faculty member said: "The only place you can kick that Kilpatrick is up." *

It was true prophecy. For many years after he had gone he remained a prominent personality on the campus, with his fame ever growing greater, helped by legend, tradition, heresy trial, and distance. The stories all agreed that he was a great teacher, that he had a powerful mind, that he made students think. He was destined to come back to Mercer, again and again, not as a prodigal son but as the illustrious and successful son of his alma mater, who had won fame and position in far places. Not only would Mercer award him the honorary LL.D. degree, but on crucial occasions—at commencements, at anniversaries, at the celebrations and the pageantry that mark the life of a university—it would call in Professor Kilpatrick to lend honor, scholarship, and dignity to the event. He would come as a returning son, acclaimed by faculty, alumni, and students; a son who had traveled much and had acquired many riches, principally of the mind and of scholarly esteem.

But that is going ahead of our story.

CHAPTER VI

Adrift

PROFESSOR KILPATRICK took his ailing wife and his daughter to Highland, North Carolina, a region with a high elevation. He then journeyed to the University of Georgia, where he taught mathematics that summer.

Here he experienced a series of reverses that would have tried the stoutest heart. The chancellor of the University of Georgia had offered him a position which he had never rejected. The chancellor had in the interim died; Kilpatrick tried to revive this offer by letting friends in strategic places know of his situation. Considering the strength of the Baptist Church in Georgia, both in terms of numbers and in political influence in the state legislature, the university thought it would be foolhardy at this time to invite him to the faculty. The authorities, however, were sympathetic to Kilpatrick's plight, and did not flatly reject his application. But they adopted Fabian tactics. They hoped in time to smuggle him into the institution, when the spotlight of publicity had dimmed and time had wiped out the memory of newspaper headlines. Otis Ashmore informed him that he had lost out for a high school teaching position in Savannah. The State College for Girls at Milledgeville, which had wanted him as recently as three months ago, found it prudent and convenient to forget the invitation. A friend advised him of a mathematics vacancy at Washington and Lee University. He applied; he was rejected.

There was still another hope—a position at the proposed George Peabody College for Teachers. Since this institution was to figure so importantly in the daydreams of Kilpatrick for many years, even after he had gone to Columbia University, the story should be briefly chronicled. George Peabody, who made a fortune in the wholesale dry goods business in Baltimore and later amassed an even greater one in England in the banking and mercantile business, left several millions to further education in the South. This money was administered by the Peabody Education

Fund. The trustees, in fulfilling the legator's request, apportioned grants to southern colleges maintaining departments of education, but the bulk of the money went to Peabody Normal School in Nashville. In 1905 the board proposed to wind up its affairs and liquidate the capital. The trustees proposed to divide the money equally among the southern states, with the proviso that these states use the funds for educational purposes. Those who opposed this outcome pointed out that the allotments to the states would be small and that the fund would be dissipated without tangible or lasting results. Especially vigorous in opposition were the friends and the alumni of the old Peabody Normal School. Professor Moseley, himself a graduate of the school, was delegated by the alumni to represent them; and in this fight Moseley solicited the help of Professor Kilpatrick. Both men favored the establishment of a strong and well-endowed southern college for teachers, which, they hoped, would do for the South what Teachers College at Columbia University was doing for the North. Kilpatrick had personally appeared before the Peabody trustees in connection with this matter. In the midst of the excitement incident to the campaign, Moseley had repeatedly assured Kilpatrick that when the school was established, the latter was certain to be invited to an important professorial position. Even while Kilpatrick was entrenched at Mercer, this assurance fell on receptive ears. And now especially Kilpatrick looked forward to such an invitation, but there was no prospect of anything eventuating in this connection for the next two or three years.

"For the time being," said Kilpatrick, "I had nothing—no position, no great amount of money, a tubercular wife. In my last year, my salary was \$1,800; but for seven or eight years before that, my salary was \$1,500. You see I had very little to save on."

In the welter of these rejections he received a firm and positive offer. It came from a friend, Mr. Gibson, superintendent of schools of Columbus, Georgia, who wanted him to become the principal of the local high school and to teach mathematics at \$1,600 a year. Reluctantly he accepted, but even in the midst of his failures he made this reservation: if the University of Georgia—still continuing its Fabian tactics—should want him, he would have the privilege of rejecting the offer. Shortly thereafter he was asked by the state normal school to come there and teach. Since his reservations were restricted to the University of Georgia, he consulted with his friends as to whether he was morally justified in widening the loophole. They felt he was not, with which opinion he concurred. Since he had withheld a firm commitment longer than he thought fair to Superintendent Gibson, he now bound himself irrevocably to acceptance.

At the end of the summer session he visited with his family in their

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mountain retreat; stayed with them until the approach of the fall school year, and then started out for Columbus. On his way he stopped at the University of Georgia, where, exhilarated and overjoyed, he learned that he was elected "adjunct professor of mathematics" at a salary of \$1,500. Stirred to the quick, he wrote to Marie exuberantly: "Athens will be a good place for us. I'll get us a good place to board. All will go well." He cautioned her: "Don't you worry to write. I want you to save your strength."

He explained his present predicament to the University and was told that he could have the appointment immediately or it would be held over for the following year.

He told Superintendent Gibson of this new development, explaining: "I'm not asking you to release me; I only want you to know the situation." Gibson told him it would be all right for him to leave if he could find a substitute to take over his work; but since Kilpatrick's efforts in this direction were unavailing, he remained in Columbus for the year.

In many respects it was a sad year. In Columbus he had difficulty in finding a home for his wife and daughter. In his ceaseless search he met with rebuff after rebuff, for homeowners were wary about renting to a tubercular person. One day, while conducting his perennial search, he came across a fine home with a large front sunny room and a lovely view of garden and open fields. The elderly woman who owned the house welcomed Kilpatrick cordially. She felt a close kinship to this unorthodox Kilpatrick, for was she not a suffragette, a vegetarian, and on principle opposed to the wearing of corsets? This business of tuberculosis had no terror for her. Poor child! Sick as she was! Of course, he could have the room. Kilpatrick at once sent for his wife; and now the family was reunited.

To go back to a high school was indeed a comedown for Kilpatrick. No matter how hard he tried to suppress his feelings, he wished to be elsewhere. "To compare my present aimless existence," he wrote Marie before the family was reunited, "with what I might have at Athens [the site of the University of Georgia] is trying on me. Sometimes I feel that I cannot stand it . . ." But he did not sulk. Soon he was hard at work improving methodology, organizing a teachers' library, improving discipline, successfully persuading the school board to abolish his pet school aversions, honors and prizes. At the beginning he would get to school by six o'clock in the morning (Sundays, seven o'clock) and stay until 5:30 P.M. The result of his unremitting labor began to show; he heard that nice things were being said about him and his school, and he was indeed pleased.

At Columbus he became stronger in his faith—a Neo-Hegelian spiritual concept of God and man. Here too he entered upon a lifelong friendship with the Reverend Dr. M. Ashby Jones, a liberal local Baptist minister. The two held long discussions, and Kilpatrick, to his surprise, found that they agreed theologically in nearly all respects. He joined the church of this good and wise man, and he agreed to teach a Sunday-school class. Later he worked with teachers to revise Sunday-school methodology and curriculum.

In his spiritual life he sought to identify himself more closely with God. He determined to cultivate "sweetness of temper, especially inwardly; absolute purity and loyalty in thought; work rather than selfish browsing; trusting in the power of love; thoughtfulness of others." He records that he arose "immediately and set to work on some neglected tasks."

Here he participated in intercultural work for the first time. In Atlanta there occurred a race riot in which several Negroes were killed. Gunby Jordan, the banker and industrialist of the city, organized a group of citizens to study local conditions, to prevent the spread of hate and violence. Kilpatrick joined this group and planned a program for action.

The illness of his wife became progressively worse. Marie was in great pain and agony.

The doctor calls; Marie asks what he says. I tell her that she cannot be with us much longer. She shows no regret. On the contrary she says that the doctor ought not to say so and thus disappoint her unless it is true.

I tell her that we will meet in that other world. She says "I am not thinking of the other world; I am thinking of this one. I want you and Margaret to be happy here." . . . She then tells me to take good care of Margaret, that she wishes us both to be happy.

She then told her husband that her love of him "has been the guiding star of my life." Marie died that morning. She was buried in the churchyard of the Episcopal church in Marianna, Florida, where she was married and where her sons lay buried.

At the end of the academic year Kilpatrick received a telegram from Dr. P. P. Claxton, professor of education at the University of Tennessee, to teach the subject matter and methodology of algebra and mathematics at the Knoxville summer school, which offer he promptly accepted. On the school's staff were two members of Teachers College, Professor Thorndike, who was giving a course in the "Fundamental Problems in Education," and Professor Percival R. Cole, who was lecturing on "Herbart and Froebel." Kilpatrick was a frequent auditor at the classes of both. He liked Cole and he was much impressed with Thorndike. He sought Thorn-

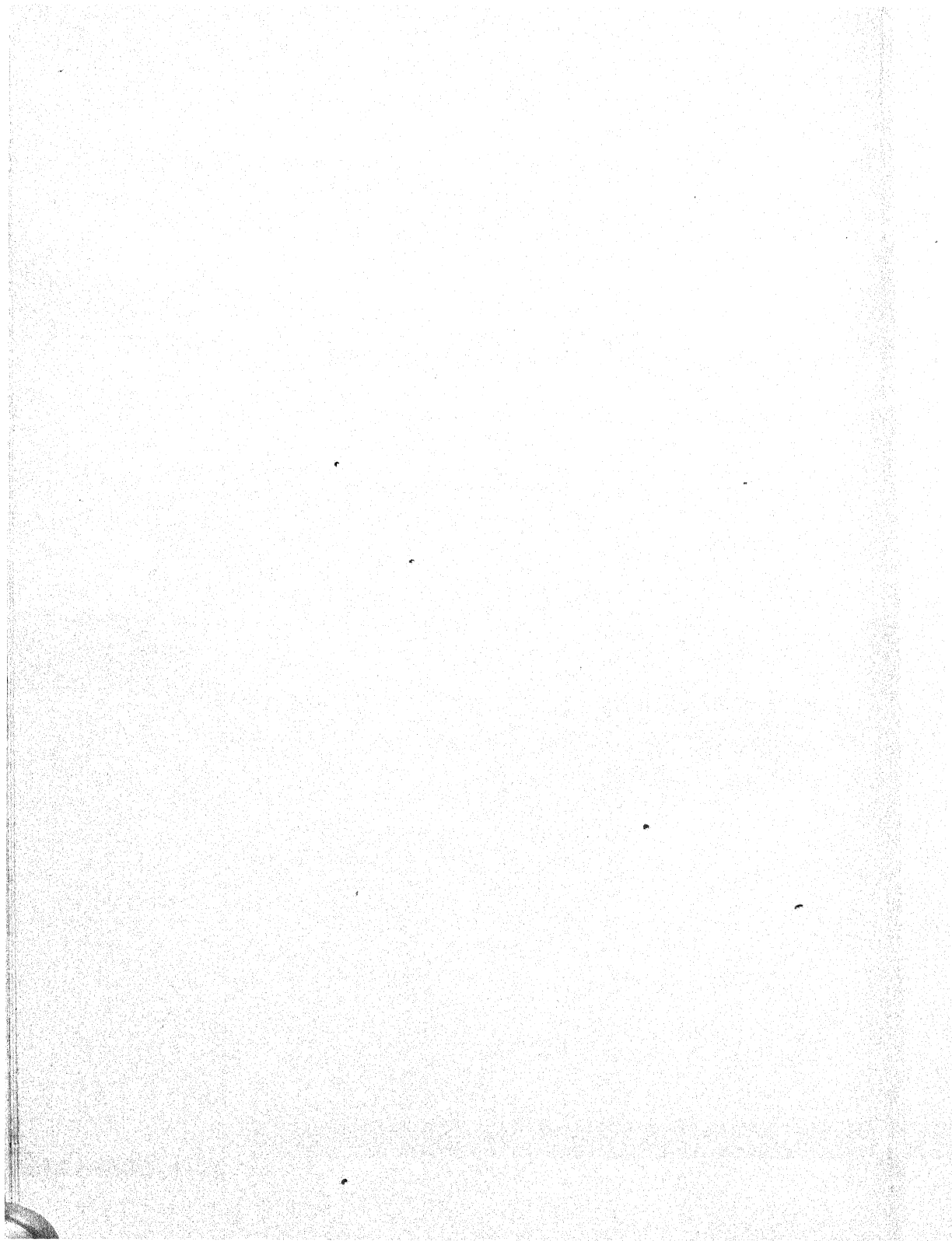
dike out, and once, while the two were going downtown, Thorndike advised him to take work at Teachers College. Kilpatrick applied for a scholarship, and one paying \$250 a year was granted him.

Although his main interest at the time was religion, he was determined to study at Teachers College and eventually to teach education. Before his departure, he managed to see his friend, Professor T. J. Woolter, of the University of Georgia, who spoke encouragingly of the possibility of a junior professorship in education and philosophy and he suggested that Kilpatrick prepare himself accordingly. This was what Kilpatrick hoped and prayed for. His whole emotional living and thinking was fervently bound up with the South; and here he wanted to work, to achieve and to live. Long after he had reached distinction as an eminent professor at Columbia University he still felt like an exile and he yearned for the feel under his feet of southern soil, for the grace and dignity of southern social life, for the friendliness and hospitality of southern traditions.

It was an unreconstructed Southerner who was heading for New York and Teachers College.

PART II

At Teachers College



CHAPTER VII

Beginning at Teachers College

IN TEACHERS COLLEGE, Kilpatrick found an institution pervaded with messianic zeal. Here came dedicated, serious-minded students, not simply to accumulate credits for a degree, still less for campus adventures, but to build a profession. Here, as Dean James Earl Russell wrote, there were "no athletic sports, no crew, no football, no baseball, no glee club, no debates, no fraternities, no intercollegiate sports."¹ Here was deep concern for all children—the normal, the bright, the feeble-minded, the deaf, the blind, the crippled. Here was deep concern about crime, delinquency, child labor, adult education, the cultural integration of the mosaic of ethnic groups that went to make up America; and here was much discussion and thinking about a philosophy of education that would build a strong democratic school system. Here the emphasis was on pressing social problems and ways of meeting them. Here students left their classrooms with fervency, enthusiasm, intent on returning to their communities to try out what they were learning.

Kilpatrick was wont to illustrate the practical kind of education that dominated Teachers College by contrasting the different approach to psychological problems of Professor Tichener of Cornell University and of his colleague, Professor Edward L. Thorndike. In his psychological laboratory, Tichener was concerned with academic abstractions—with feeling, memory, sensation; it led nowhere and it ended—for practical purposes—in nothing. Tichener appeared not in the least concerned with the practical applications of his investigations. A British psychologist gave expression to this viewpoint when he said: "We don't want a psychology that can be put to work."

Thorndike's approach was primarily functional and dynamic. He was concerned with how children learn, how the processes of education can be made more efficient and effective, how transfer of learning takes place,

¹ James E. Russell, "Standards of Scholarship and the Professional Spirit in Teachers College," *Columbia University Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 3, June, 1907.

how adults learn. Both Tichener and Thorndike were "rigidly scientific," Kilpatrick hastened to add, but their objectives were radically different.²

At Teachers College the students, after studying under Professor Thorndike, looked forward to the day when they could go back home and tell their teachers about this new psychology; when they came out of Professor McMurry's classroom, they could hardly wait for the chance to try out his methodology in their own classroom.

If truth be told, the profession of education had dire need of such devotion, for it was in a shabby and woebegone state. In polite academic circles the study of education was regarded with an aloof indulgence that bordered on contempt. John Dewey, who was one of the early iconoclastic defenders of the notion that the subject of education could become as scholarly a field of inquiry as traditional subjects, told of a university president who maintained that any intelligent person could "learn in a few hours all that can be learned, theoretically, about pedagogy." The public, observed Dewey, regarded "pedagogy as the pretended art of teaching teachers how to teach by the means of trivial devices and patent panaceas, all of which tended to make 'method' a substitute for knowledge of subject matter."³

The disrepute in which the study of education was held was reflected in academic practice. In 1907, on the faculties of Princeton, Johns Hopkins, and Catholic universities there was not a single instructor of education; Pennsylvania and Yale had one; Cornell, two; Harvard, two; Virginia, two; Wisconsin, four; Syracuse, one.⁴ Even the then-revered University of Berlin could boast of only a part-time assistant in education.⁵ In contrast, Teachers College had a galaxy of twenty full professors, six associate professors, thirty-nine instructors, seven lecturers, and the services of five other professors from other departments of Columbia University.

President Isaiah Bowman of Johns Hopkins University pointed out graphically the low estate of the profession, in an address delivered at Teachers College on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. He said that as late as 1894 the curriculum and methods of instruction in some country schools were as crude and primitive as in 1844; and that a number of country school teachers were paid as little as \$15 a month; and that few

² W. H. Kilpatrick, Address, Teachers College Alumni Conference, March, 1921; Teachers College Contribution to Education; also, "Higher Professional Studies in American Education," *New Era* (London) 7:127-131, July, 1926.

³ John Dewey, "Education as a University Study," *Columbia University Quarterly*, June, 1907.

⁴ Henry Suzzallo, *Columbia University Quarterly*, June, 1907.

⁵ Told to the writer by Professor Kilpatrick.

schools in the Midwest could boast of libraries exceeding twenty volumes.⁶ Even in the great and wealthy state of New York only 7 per cent of its teachers in 1907 were college graduates "and less than 20 per cent have ever attended a Normal School. The situation in the country at large is even worse."⁷

Teachers College changed this situation radically and completely; it made education a scholarly and respected subject of inquiry, and it built up a profession of education that eventually attained widespread public prestige and wielded enormous power.

By 1907 Teachers College was a unique institution with an international student body representing thirty-two foreign nations; its graduates were already occupying strategic educational positions in such remote areas as India, Turkey, China, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Canada. It had a larger number of graduate students than any other department of Columbia University. On a visit to Chicago University in 1912 Professor Kilpatrick was asked by Professor Judd, chairman of the education department, how many students at Teachers College were working for the Ph.D. degree. Kilpatrick answered three hundred. Countered Professor Judd: "We have thirty at the University of Chicago."

This dynamic, vital institution, which was to leave an impress on the entire country and on the whole world, was created by the vision and the executive genius of one man, Dean James E. Russell, and a group of great teachers whom he gathered. He "built," says Kilpatrick, "an institution which for many years, until he retired, was head and shoulders over that of any other in the world in the advanced study of education. It may sound extravagant, but it is, I believe, literally true, that in 1927 Teachers College alone in this respect outranked France, Germany and Britain, all put together."

A graduate of Cornell University and of Leipzig University, where he obtained his Ph.D. degree, Dean Russell came to Teachers College in 1897 from the University of Colorado. He assumed leadership of what was essentially an undergraduate school, where the emphasis was on domestic arts and manual training.⁸ Strongly influenced by his German

⁶ Isaiah Bowman, "The Faith We Celebrate," address on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary Convocation of Teachers College, 1894-1944.

⁷ James E. Russell, *op. cit.*

⁸ Teachers College grew out of the "social service" zeal of a group of women, principally Grace H. Dodge, who sought to teach children cooking, sewing, handiwork, arts, crafts; to prepare domestics in the care of the home; to train young women in personal hygiene and the care of the sick; to teach boys manual crafts. The Industrial Association, the forerunner of Teachers College, was committed "to promote special training for both sexes in any of those industries which affect the house and home . . . and will enable those receiving it to become self-supporting."

training, Dean Russell changed the emphasis to research and specialized graduate training. "I have heard him speak of a table that he had made so that he could sit at one end, while the graduate students would sit around it," recalls Kilpatrick. "He meant to conduct seminars, right in Teachers College, exactly as in Germany. But he never used that table. So many students registered for his first graduate course that no table was sufficiently large to seat them."

Kilpatrick spoke of the great teachers at Teachers College, as he knew them both as a student and later as a colleague. It was they who under Dean Russell's leadership put Teachers College "on the map"; and it was their pioneer work that gave the American educational system direction and philosophy and laid the foundation for its present strength and eminence.

First of all, there was Professor Thorndike, who had already begun his famous studies in animal psychology. "Thorndike," said Kilpatrick, "was young, brilliant and vigorous. He captured the imagination of people. He wasn't much interested in teaching. He said a good man would learn whether he was taught or not, and, as for a poor man, it didn't much matter whether he learned or not. He did a great deal of research and he got students interested on working on research problems.

"He used the now classic Stimulus-Response (S-R) formula. Learning to him meant essentially the association of a response to a stimulus. I myself as his student was very much influenced by Thorndike in my earlier thinking. I have changed in a good many respects from this position, but at the time what he taught seemed to be wonderfully useful. I thought he was in advance of any in the field and others thought so, too. When I was a student, he had not become involved in measurements; that phase of his work came later."

Also, there was Professor Paul Monroe, who was creating and developing the study of the history of education. His book, *The History of Education*, written about forty-five years ago, "still remains one of the best, if not the best." No author who has written since on the subject has not been indebted to him. Monroe stirred his students to do original research. Kilpatrick's own Ph.D. thesis on the Dutch schools stemmed from one of Monroe's classroom assignments. "Monroe studied the history of education," says Kilpatrick, "from a sociological point of view, and he made a genuine contribution." His students studied Greek history, Roman

The program met with wide approval and instantaneous success. To meet the ever-growing need for teachers for such courses, the trustees of the association organized in 1888 the New York College for the Training of Teachers, and in 1902 the name was changed to Teachers College. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler was the first president of the training school and Dr. Walter L. Herve was its first dean.

history, colonial history, and they went back to source material. He was, however, hurt as a teacher by that book of his, fine as it was. Until he had published his book, he was "doing a fine job of teaching. But after he finished the book, I heard him say many times that he didn't know how to teach. He could teach students to work at original problems, but he could not teach the contents of his book."

One of the great leaders of educational research from 1905 to 1914, Professor Monroe made many important surveys of foreign school systems, and here his outstanding ability in research came in good stead. And yet his ability as a teacher did not nearly equal his ability in research. He had a habit of insisting on a certain word as an answer to a question. A student could approximate the idea, but if he didn't hit on the exact word that Monroe had in mind he was sharply told, no, and Monroe would call on another student until he came on one who could give him the word he had in mind.

Then there was Professor Frank McMurry, an extraordinarily popular teacher, who was in charge of elementary education. Professor McMurry had originally been an Herbartian, but by the time he came to Teachers College he had studied Dewey and had acquired a different concept of education. He conducted vigorous discussions in his classes, and the students liked this very much.

Professor McMurry popularized the problem-method approach. He didn't want children to memorize what was in a textbook and then echo back what they had memorized. He wanted problems raised: Why was it difficult for the colonies to unite? Why did New York become a great city, surpassing Boston and Philadelphia? Why are houses built differently in different climates? And he wanted children to find the answers by consulting books, by visits to libraries and museums, by talking to people and the like. By this method the children had more of a chance to participate, to "get in" on things. "The children knew what they were about; hence, they could do more intelligent work, and they could bring their minds into more meaningful and active participation than by simply memorizing pages of a textbook."⁹ Until 1904 he was the foremost leader of elementary education.

Professor Suzzallo came from California to teach at Teachers College

⁹ Professor McMurry was a staunch friend of Kilpatrick's, both as a student and later, while an instructor. On his part Kilpatrick was much taken with McMurry, and they were extremely sympathetic and encouraging, one to the other. Kilpatrick, however, after long discussions with various of his colleagues, came to the regretful conclusion that they differed fundamentally in philosophy of education. McMurry was primarily subject-matter minded, Kilpatrick concluded, and he advocated the problem-method approach because he thought it was a more stimulating and effective method to acquire subject matter.

at about the time that Kilpatrick enrolled as a student. He was a public figure, with a background of varied experiences. He lectured extensively over the country, and he helped materially in spreading the name and fame of Teachers College. Suzzallo developed the study of what is now known as educational sociology.

The foregoing¹⁰ were the principal men, according to Kilpatrick, who first made Teachers College a national institution, and influenced every schoolroom in the land. They published voluminously; they lectured extensively; their students went into the field and became teachers, principals, professors of education, presidents of normal schools, colleges, and universities. By 1921 one out of every seven trained teachers and at least three out of every four educational supervisors had taken work at Teachers College.

Many of the great and eminent figures in education in the early days were Teachers College products. In talking of the caliber of student that came to Teachers College, Kilpatrick said that they were every whit as able, brilliant, capable as those he had known at Johns Hopkins. At Johns Hopkins the greatness emanated from the professors; the institution centered around them. At Teachers College the greatness emanated also from the student body; they were social minded and they meant to achieve on their own. To illustrate the character of the Teachers College students, Kilpatrick picked up his diary for 1915 and turned to a page which contained the names of the guests at one of his Sunday afternoon teas, a monthly custom he continued for nearly all the years he was on the college's faculty; and he began to talk about these students. I am setting down what he said:

"There were present Mr. and Mrs. Loram. He went back to South Africa to head the department for the education of natives of the Union of South Africa. Eventually, he came back to this country and became professor of education at Yale University. The next man was Mr. Eaton, who was for thirty years, I believe, professor of education at Cornell University. He has just retired. Next was Miss Agnes Rogers, a very bright Scottish girl, who became professor of education at Bryn Mawr. Next was another Scottish girl, Miss Lawson. She married before she had any chance to make a great name for herself. She was a very fine student. The next was a British girl, Miss Hartle, who was later head of a training college at Brighton, England. The next was Mr. Clifford Woody, who was later professor of education at the University of Michigan. He died

¹⁰ John Dewey is not included in this list because he taught primarily at Columbia University, not Teachers College, although each year he gave a course for the latter institution.

recently. Next was Mr. Tom Woody, who is now professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania. Next was Mr. Theisen, who is now an associate superintendent of schools in Milwaukee, I believe. Next was Mr. Taylor; I don't recognize him. Next was Mr. and Mrs. Hunt and their son, Gordon. Mr. Hunt is now Dr. Hunt, the president of the Oneonta State Teachers College, and perhaps the foremost man in this country in the organization of teachers' colleges. Next was Mr. and Mrs. Maddox. Mr. Maddox later became president of Rockford College. Next was Miss Taylor, a girl from Georgia whom I knew well. Next was Miss Pennock, who has worked in various school systems, and, finally, became educational editor of a publishing house. Miss O'Donohue was a friend of my wife's. Next there was Miss Gambriel, who is now professor of education at Yale University. Next there was Mr. and Mrs. Reavis. Mr. Reavis was later assistant superintendent of the Maryland state schools. He went from there to become dean of the school of education at the University of Pittsburgh. His health broke down, and he left there. He was recently retired as associate superintendent of schools in Cincinnati. Next there was Miss Day, who was an assistant professor here at Teachers College. Next there was Miss Goodrich, who later became associate superintendent of schools of Des Moines, working with Dr. Studebaker,¹¹ who later became United States commissioner of education. Next there was Mr. Pettit, who has just retired as the head of the New York School for Social Work. This was indeed a good record for a Sunday afternoon tea!"

The unusual ability of its students eventually led to the loss of the peculiar uniqueness of Teachers College. As its graduates went out into the field they planted seeds of little teachers' colleges all over the country and these plantings with time developed into mighty and flourishing independent teachers' colleges. But the old and original Teachers College led the way, and for many years it was preeminent and unique.

* ¹¹ Dr. Studebaker also was a former student of Professor Kilpatrick's.

CHAPTER VIII

A Student Again

IN 1907 Kilpatrick, at the age of thirty-six, became a student again. Coming as he did from a position of educational eminence in Georgia, this was in certain respects a depressing experience. As he surveyed his small dormitory room in Livingston Hall, he recorded his loneliness in his diary: "I am sad, no companionship, no letters, no certainty as to what I shall do. . . . I can think of no way of becoming less so than by losing myself in my work."¹ And to work he set himself with customary devotion and zeal.

A paper he wrote in doing a routine classroom assignment for Professor Monroe gained for him considerable favorable publicity. In it he sought to answer the question: Which was the first school in this country—the Boston Latin School, established in 1636, or the Village School of New Amsterdam, allegedly founded in 1633? Since he had strong antiquarian interests, this was the sort of problem that always fascinated him.

That the first Dutch school was established in 1633 had been taken for granted. To his amazement, while browsing through the Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York, he read that Adam Roelantsen, generally reputed to be the first teacher of this school, *obtained his teaching certificate in 1637, not in 1633*. And there appeared to be no Dutch school whatsoever until as late as 1636, for Wouter van Twiller, director-general of New Amsterdam, informed the home authorities that the local minister urgently requests "us to provide a schoolmaster, who might instruct the youth, both the Dutch and the blacks, in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and also serve as sexton and precentor." This letter was dated August 14, 1636.

Kilpatrick further discovered that this request was favorably acted upon in Amsterdam on August 4, 1637; one Adam Roelantsen was examined for the position and authorized to teach by the West India Company. After studying the sailing schedules to New Amsterdam, Kilpatrick

¹ Diary, September 24, 1913.

came to the conclusion that Roelantsen could not have arrived here before the spring of 1638 and could not have started his teaching career before that time. "At any rate," said Kilpatrick, "there was no official schoolmaster prior to this date and no evidence of any earlier school. Considering the available data, we seem compelled to place the most probable date for the earliest known school in Manhattan at some time after August 4, 1637, and before June 10, 1638, most probably at about April 1, 1638."

His findings created quite a stir in educational circles. "The date of 1633 had been accepted in the printed documents," explains Kilpatrick, "and there was a bronze tablet at the school testifying to the authenticity of this fact, and people generally took it for granted. By my proving otherwise I got a little reputation. Professor Monroe was pleased, and he asked me to write a paper on the subject, which was eventually published in the *Educational Review*, at that time the foremost educational journal in the country. And I received a number of invitations to lecture."

In 1909 Professor Monroe offered Kilpatrick a part-time position in the history of education, and soon thereafter Monroe obtained for him another part-time position at Pratt Institute.

Kilpatrick confessed in his diary "everything has a bluish tinge." And for four years, from 1907 until 1911, this "bluish tinge" continued, for they were uncertain and insecure years without certain prospects. He was buoyed up by many hopes, but nearly always they were shattered.

As a teacher, Kilpatrick disliked being a subordinate. Monroe had already published his textbook, and he "had rather fixed ideas about how things should be managed," which in a measure curbed Kilpatrick's initiative and his unique talent as a teacher. "To be subordinate is bad," Kilpatrick recorded in his diary, "to be subordinate to man is much worse. To be compelled to teach as a mere hack seems almost more than I can stand. Surely, surely, one more year will end this humiliation." And at such moments his perennial hope came as a solace: "I cannot stay here with satisfaction nor can I now go. I hope the future will soon open for me an opportunity for work in the South, preferably in Georgia, where I can take hold with all my soul and feel that every stroke counts."²

But even his tenuous and unsatisfactory connection with Teachers College he knew to be temporary. Dean Russell was outspoken in his belief that Kilpatrick should go back South; that he belonged there; and that he could do his best work there. The fact that Kilpatrick was no longer young and that he already had his distinguished head of silky white hair

² Diary, January 1, 1910.

and that Professor Monroe, who was Kilpatrick's age, was already showing evidence of failing health—to what extent these factors entered into Dean Russell's reluctance to make Kilpatrick a permanent faculty member one cannot say. Kilpatrick concurred with the belief that his place was in the South, for he wanted to work with people he loved and understood. During this dark period he held on to a bright vision, a professorship at the University of Georgia, promised to him as soon as a school of education was established there. In this connection he kept in close touch with Professor Woofter of that university, who was most encouraging. So certain was Kilpatrick of this eventuality that when the University of Mississippi offered him in 1909 a professorship in secondary education he turned it down, for he preferred not to work in a strange state among people he did not know.

During his first year at Teachers College a boon companion of his was Dr. Wyckliffe Rose, with whom he had studied in Knoxville in 1902 and who was now connected with the General Education Board. They went to plays together, they explored the dramatic streets of the city, they discovered odd and interesting eating places; and they talked and talked, especially about the South, a subject dear to both their hearts. Especially did they talk about the proposed Peabody Normal School. Because of his connection with the General Education Board, Dr. Rose occupied a pivotal position in the organization of the institution. For the presidency of this new school, Kilpatrick urged the appointment of Professor Suzzallo.

In the complicated negotiations that ensued, Kilpatrick acted as go-between. This was indeed a pleasant task for him, for "I like to be consulted and be confidential adviser to the president." The behind-the-scenes maneuverings for such posts appear complex. "Meet Rose who asks me to meet at the Waldorf Astoria Messrs. Cole and Bradford of the Peabody school trustees. They had come with the instruction of investigating thoroughly the question of Suzzallo's fitness for the presidency . . . They ask many questions. I tell them that I conceive Suzzallo next to Rose the best man. They seem to feel the same. I advise that they see Dean Russell and President Butler. They ask me to make arrangements for them. I do this after I come back. Have word with Rose who has been talking with Suzzallo; he thinks Suzzallo the man."

Meanwhile, Kilpatrick kept Suzzallo apprised of the situation, and Suzzallo promised that should he be chosen for the post he would offer Kilpatrick a professorship; furthermore that Kilpatrick would "be the first man" to "interpret the South and the southern situation for him. He has already asked me to be on the lookout for suitable men for the faculty."

Kilpatrick's suggestion that the trustees consult Suzzallo's superiors pierced Suzzallo's presidential balloon. Dean Russell became concerned over the fact that Suzzallo was born a Catholic and that there were few Catholics in the South. While Suzzallo was not an observing Catholic, the lack of any religious affiliation would be, Dean Russell thought, a handicap. With this view the trustees concurred. "I thought then and I think now," says Kilpatrick, "it was a serious mistake. The man they eventually chose, Bruce Payne, was a good man, but not a great man, not equal to Suzzallo."

At any rate, the hopes he had built in connection with this situation came to naught.

About this time Professor Woofter wrote to him that there was small likelihood of a position at the University of Georgia materializing in the near future, and that he should be on the lookout for some other possibility.

Kilpatrick had no adequate knowledge of the bitterness, opposition, and tales of heresy connected with his name in Georgia. Gradually he became cognizant of the full depth of such feeling in certain quarters. While attending a meeting in 1909 of the Georgia Educational Association, Dr. S. Y. Jameson, now president of Mercer University, spoke of the enormous possibilities for good and evil inherent in the philosophy professorship; and, conscious of Kilpatrick's presence in the audience, said rather pointedly that Mercer was fortunate in having this professorial chair graced by a "Christian gentleman of deep learning." He also attacked so-called "scientific education" and "the two by four professors of philosophy."³

Kilpatrick learned later that President Jameson had previously warned Dr. Woofter that his connection with "the state university would cause hard feelings."

A minister of the Madison Baptist Church, Georgia, wrote in his *Weekly Bulletin*. "... When we were at Mercer, 1903-06, the leading professor there was an infidel. He is now teaching his nefarious doctrines in a great Northern University. He was fired out of Mercer. All these uncircumsized Philistines who are teaching these destructive doctrines ought to be put on a ship and sent to Germany where they belong."⁴

All this was disquieting to Kilpatrick, but he was yet to receive an even worse blow. While he was teaching part time at Teachers College, a full-time vacancy arose. Naturally, he was hopeful that he might re-

³ Diary, June 23, 1909.

⁴ July 10, 1921. This reference was probably in line with the hate engendered as an aftermath of World War I.

ceive the appointment. Instead, he was passed over for someone else. Professor MacVannel of the philosophy department favored this other person because "his mind was more flexible and accordingly more suited for younger students,"⁵ while Professor Monroe thought that as thinkers they were equal, but that as teachers Kilpatrick was the superior. His good friend, Professor Suzzallo, finally acquiesced "for administrative reasons,"⁶ which in polite academic circles usually means that a faculty member does not want to jeopardize his standing by too strong opposition to a popular position. In passing over Kilpatrick, who has since been acknowledged even by his critics to have been the greatest teacher of his day, the committee chose an instructor, who proved such a failure that he was soon eased out of Teachers College and packed off to another institution, from where he mysteriously disappeared, only to be found some time later in an amnesic state, working as a dishwasher.

Kilpatrick, nevertheless, was passed over.

Trying dispassionately to view his position, Kilpatrick set down the following on his thirty-eighth birthday: "I feel ten or twenty years older than a year ago. Then I looked forward confidently to the future as full of bright achievement. I believe I have far more than average ability but I believe I have wandered too much. Not so much that I have wandered from a good choice, but that change means to begin at the beginning. I am too old to begin at the beginning. A year or two years ago I thought the South would welcome me with open arms as soon as I wished to return for work. Now I see that opinion was vain. The South may invite me back but not with shouts or acclamation. . . . I see that I am a weakling. . . . The influence I thought I have seems a vain hope. I am becoming a pedant, far away from life, fixed at hack work. Ten years ago I began to go up; I had power. People looked up to me; young men allied themselves with me. For four years now each step has lowered my hold. I am respectable in the eyes of my [southern] friends because they think I have a good place here. If they knew that I am not even an instructor they would feel as I that I am emptied of what I was."⁷

⁵ Diary, September 13, 1911.

⁶ Diary, September 13, 1911.

⁷ Diary, November 20, 1909.

CHAPTER IX

John Dewey and Kilpatrick's New World

PROBABLY no individual influenced Kilpatrick as much as Professor John Dewey. "The work under Dewey," he says, "remade my philosophy of life and education." His admiration for Dewey has continued throughout life. Even now the mention of Dewey's name elicits in him the strongest emotions of regard and affection. As a philosopher, Kilpatrick rates Dewey as the third greatest of all times, "next after Plato and Aristotle and above Kant and Hegel as a contributor to thought and life."¹

After he had achieved universal esteem for his own profound contributions to education, Kilpatrick noted in his diary: "Sometimes I am vexed with myself that I find so little to object to in John Dewey's position."² As a young instructor he consecrated himself to advance Dewey's teachings. "I feel in some measure that I am best qualified of those about here to interpret Dewey. His own lectures are frequently impenetrable to even intelligent students. If Suzzallo's plans should materialize, and I am called upon to teach the philosophy of education, I should endeavor to make Dewey's point of view more accessible to people generally."³

He still cherishes this statement from his mentor: "Since you have asked me specifically," Dewey wrote to him, "about your understanding of my ideas, [which Kilpatrick was preparing to present in his book on the Montessori system] I do say that I would not desire a more sympathetically intelligent interpreter."⁴

Later, as associate and colleague, he had occasion to review a manuscript by Dewey, concerning which he wrote: ". . . it is wonderfully

¹ Diary, March 18, 1935.

² Diary, April 17, 1930.

³ Diary, October 8, 1911.

⁴ Quoted in his letter to his mother, July 16, 1913.

clear and easy. I quite envy him his power of easy writing. I much more envy him his genius in making for himself a point of view.⁵ . . . I would wish he had taken greater pains to make it smoother as I expect it to become a classic.⁶ Kilpatrick's judgment proved true. The book appeared later entitled *Democracy and Education*, and it has become a classic.

We have already recorded how Kilpatrick's first course with Dewey at the University of Chicago proved disappointing. Afterwards, Kilpatrick read Dewey's *Interest as Related to the Will*, *The Child and the Curriculum*, *School and Society*, *The Educational Situation*, and these books opened a new world of thinking for him.

When he came to Teachers College, Kilpatrick again took work with Dewey, and this time "Dewey took." It is interesting to record Kilpatrick's reaction to Dewey as a teacher; his diary furnishes the following:

Hear Dewey. It is so easy I am inclined to doubt my choice, still I think I am right.⁷

I find Dewey's course so far easy; I hope I shall have more content than so far appears. I am surprised at the youth of certain girls in the class; they do not appear to be over 21.⁸

[Discussion in Dewey's lecture room.] I find in myself a more or less distinct tendency to go off half-cocked and to express myself badly. This tendency is definitely enough to give me some uneasiness. I don't know whether I am too old to fall in with the alertness I once seemed to have, or whether I am not as yet used to the situation. I borrow the notes of Miss Dora Askowith, a Barnard senior, apparently a Jewess . . . She is rather young to be taking Dewey's 227-228.⁹

Hear Dewey, excellent; I am getting more and more from him; I feel I am climbing up in the grasp of it both absolutely and relatively.¹⁰

Stand test under Dewey . . . I do not feel at all jubilant about my success.¹¹

Hear Dewey in psychological ethics. I am more and more an admirer of Dewey.¹²

[He takes part in a class discussion.] I am pleased to see that Dewey appreciates my point of view.¹³

Hear Dewey; last lecture on Ethical Analysis. I am very sorry that it is so. Prof. Dewey has made a great difference in my thinking. I came here wishing

⁵ Diary, October 15, 1915.

⁶ Diary, October 21, 1915.

⁷ Diary, October 3, 1907.

⁸ Diary, October 10, 1907.

⁹ Diary, October 17, 1907. Miss Askowith is now a professor at Hunter College.

¹⁰ Diary, December 19, 1907.

¹¹ Diary, December 10, 1907.

¹² Diary, October 5, 1908.

¹³ Diary, November 2, 1908.

to do for education what I conceived Caird had done for religion; I leave having given up the whole attitude of desire for a closed universe. Perhaps I should rather say belief in a closed universe. Prof. Dewey's fundamental point of view seems as unassailable as science. Any particular formulation or any particular method may have to yield to a newer or a better; but it would only be by doing better what we are now trying to do. I am sorry to feel my divergence in religion much increased. I had rather wished and hoped to find something I could advocate along with my less critical fellows. I still have that but its formulation is not of the nature to satisfy them even a little bit.

I feel in one sense that I have a great viewpoint which I must work out for the rest of my life. With the feeling that I am hearing Prof. Dewey on the close of the course comes the feeling of pain that it is so. Yet I must go out and go to work.¹⁴

MacVannel [a professor of his at Teachers College] tells me that Dewey said to him of me: "He's the best I ever had." I am more gratified than at any other estimate that could have been made.¹⁵

As a result of Dewey's teaching, Kilpatrick gave up his neo-Hegelian philosophy and accepted Dewey's experimental outlook. He was now committed to the experimental method in all areas of living. From now on he would accept no absolute! No principle, no faith, no authority, no dogma was sacrosanct, beyond criticism and beyond the test of man's intelligence. As John Locke said: "He that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the eye of both." Said Dewey: "Intelligent action is the sole and ultimate source of mankind in every field whatsoever," and for Kilpatrick that, henceforth, would be the criterion by which he would judge all situations.

From now on what mattered for Kilpatrick was the world and the living around him; and it was the main task of man to make this world and this living better. The best way of achieving this end was to use intelligence, man's intelligence; there was no other way, no better way: man could resort to nothing else. The test of whether anything was good or bad was an inductive test, the way it worked out in practice. Nothing was good or bad, except as living it out in the community made it good or bad. Kilpatrick from now on sought "a living good," good in terms of whether it made life better or richer or happier. This experimental approach—whether anything made for the best total good—was to dominate his thinking and his attitude in all areas of living. For practical purposes God did not play a part in this scheme at all. In working out this "tested good," man had to depend on his senses, on his experiences—on his intelligence. He rejected all a priori thinking, all absolutes,

¹⁴ Diary, May 14, 1909.

¹⁵ Diary, May 19, 1909.

whether they emanated from the Bible or the church or folkways or tradition or man-made institutions.

Relates Kilpatrick: "It took about a year or two of study under Dewey to understand and appreciate what he was driving at, and how fundamental his point of view was. Eventually, I began to see that instead of starting with the ultimate purpose of things—the why and wherefore of man and the universe—we should start from where we are and what we know. Philosophers of old asked, 'From what is the universe made? Is it fire, or earth, or air, or what? Is it made out of little grains of things?' We now know that you can't get at the bottom of things that way. We used to believe that the atom was the bottom of everything. Now we know that we can divide the atom; and if we go on further, we don't know whether we'll have any matter left—or what. So to try to find the ultimate unit out of which anything is made or to try to start with the ultimate purpose of anything requires that you answer your question in advance. And you don't know either of those things and you can't find the answer. So I got this from Dewey: We start where we are with our present ways of thinking and believing; we criticize these beliefs in the light of any information that we can get. If we want to know whether we should believe a principle, we should try that principle out and see whether that principle foretells the results, whether it can foretell what we might expect. To illustrate: Galileo maintained that if you take a five-pound ball and one-pound ball and you dropped them from a height, they would both fall with the same speed, provided the air did not interfere. 'No,' said the scholars of those days; 'we've studied Aristotle and Aristotle said that the five-pound ball is five times as heavy and will fall five times as fast.' Galileo persisted and he said, 'Let us try it out,' and he dropped the two balls from the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and both balls came to the ground at the same time. This is the scientific attitude. The way to find out whether anything works—a principle, a machine, or an idea—is to try it out, to test the thought. If the thought stands the test, you accept it. If it doesn't, you have to change it, and keep looking for something else that will stand the test.

"John Dewey taught me that we should use the methods of science as far as we can in all affairs of life and that we should build our philosophy on that. There are admittedly some situations which can't be tried out under experimental conditions. What should we do? Since you can't start with an answer and since you can't start with any axiom from which you can deduce an answer, you study the situation as objectively and dispassionately as you know how and you watch what happens. But the whole idea is to try out in practice to see how it works,

and then decide—depending on whether it works—whether to hold on to this belief or not. In science, it has become a fairly widespread belief and principle of action: but he wanted this same procedure—tested application—applied as far as possible to principles, ideas, and beliefs. A thing is good or evil according to whether it makes life good or evil for all concerned.” What Kilpatrick came to enthrone was tested experiences, tested thought, trying out this and that and seeing what happens.

Declared James: “Man, whatever else he may be, is primarily a practical being, whose mind is given him to aid in adapting him to his world’s life.” The critical factor in this approach was the free play of intelligence “to tell us what to believe and do.” Inductive study, not a priori thinking, must be our guide. Like Kant, Kilpatrick accepted the dictum: “Dare to reason, dare to trust your reason, dare to use your own understanding.” This kind of living and acting, he felt sure, would gain for mankind the highest and best good for all. Using his intelligence, man should be constantly striving to make things better—his personal living, his ethical outlook, his human relationships, his economic system—every aspect and every facet of living. This evolutionary growth, this “making things better,” is the lifework and the end purpose of man.

Every process, every solution should be held tentatively and experimentally and should be tested objectively, dispassionately, and scientifically. “Criticized experience is the final test of all things—experience criticized on its bearing on other experience. From this point of view, knowledge and ‘principles’ are hypotheses for guiding experience.”¹⁶

The universe was not fixed and static; it was a novelly developing universe; it was an ever-changing world that confronted man. There was no fixity, no predestination, no predetermination of events. As man made decisions and choices, man himself changed and he changed the universe. This was, as James said, “a universe with the lid off.” There was no limit to change and to growth, and there was no limit to the universe’s becoming ever better, ever wiser, an ever-more wonderful place for man. Effort mattered—but even more important in this respect, thinking mattered, not routine, rationalized thinking—thinking to defend a priori conclusions, but open-minded, flexible, tentative, experimental thinking. (“You have to watch carefully to see what is happening. If it doesn’t work, you must try something else, until you hit on something better than the old.”)

Kilpatrick believed that education was not to prepare the child for a

¹⁶ W. H. Kilpatrick, “The Philosophy of American Education,” *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 30, October, 1928.

fixed and static universe with a fixed and static future; it was to give him an understanding of this precarious, contingent, novel, every-day-brand-new universe, and to help him acquire an experimental, open-minded attitude toward all problems of living. He was to say much later that the purpose of education was not to teach what to think but how to think.

A prerequisite for this kind of thinking and living is the freest and the widest kind of intercommunication, not only of speech, press, and assembly but also of communication between all groups, all peoples, every segment of the population, for in this novelly developing universe, constantly requiring new adjustments and insights, the wisest, the best, and the most intelligent decisions can be made only when all human beings contribute of their experiences and insights. Decisions and actions changed the very course of civilization and changed man himself. No one could predict or foretell what was the destiny of man, for that depended on the decisions and actions of man.

As he continued to study with Dewey he began to perceive that the whole aim and purpose of education was to try to get every boy and every girl to become ever "more capable of thinking and deciding wisely, and not only capable of thinking but disposed to get at the best possible thinking and to act according to the best thinking that could be had. We want the whole person to be built up to do this. We further want him to be disposed to study those ways of behaving, those social customs, traditions, mores, those institutions of life which affect life, which help in making life good or the reverse. We further lay down the general principle that all institutions—all things, in fact—are to be judged by their effect on life. Also, we want these institutions to be judged by their effect on the person—what they do for him in building him up into the kind of person who will live a life good for all concerned. These were the things that I got from John Dewey as I studied his philosophy."

Thenceforth, he says, he studied every problem of education with the foregoing in mind.

How fundamental this viewpoint was can be grasped when we contrast it with the old way of looking at the universe. The older religious people and many in modern times held, says Kilpatrick, on the one hand, that effort mattered, as do such Biblical virtues as unselfishness, generosity, kindliness; but on the other hand, they believed and many still believe essentially in predestination, in a "closed universe," one that is fixed, predetermined, and static. It is true, they hold, that man has some measure of choice, and, if you examine carefully the tenets of this

older position, this power of choice and change is puny and insignificant, somewhat akin to a minute insect crawling on the ground. As opposed to James's "universe with the lid off," Omar Khayyám expressed the idea of the "closed universe" as follows:

Yea, the first morning of creation wrote
What the last day of reckoning shall read.

Emperor Marcus Aurelius stated the same idea as follows:

The rational soul . . . traverses the whole universe, stretches out into infinite time, comprehends and considers the periodical death and rebirth of all things and discerns that the men who come after us shall see no new thing, and that they who lived before us saw nothing more than we, but that so to say, every man who reaches two score years . . . has contemplated things past and all things future in virtue of the law of uniformity.

For this static preordained concept of the universe, the Christians are indebted, says Kilpatrick, to classical Greek philosophy, especially to Plato and Aristotle. It was Plato who insisted that there were "laid up in heaven" models or patterns of eternal truths, and that these existed before the foundation of the earth. Once these eternal, absolute, unchanging truths were discovered, the world would proceed without friction—perfectly. For Plato, there was a model and perfect government, a model and perfect economic system, a model and perfect social arrangement. "Aristotle accepted this," said Kilpatrick, "with the difference that time shows growth from potentiality as an acorn or an infant to the perfect actuality as the full-grown oak or the full-grown human adult. But for both Plato and Aristotle the species, oak or man, was eternal and unchanging. Christian thought accepted this position only adding that God made the perfect patterns and the various species from before the foundation of the earth and according to his will; also he communicated his will through the sacred writers and (according to the Catholics) through the church. Thus all authority came originally from God and reached man through the Bible or the church or the rulers whom he had anointed (divine rights of kings). Authority might also come from proper study whereby man learned the truth that God had established, as in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, theology, etc. It is self-evident, these pre-moderns thought, that man did not create truth. He found it where God had put it, and it was as God had made it."¹⁷

Under this concept of the universe, effort became meaningless, since it

¹⁷ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Changing Times and Our New Outlook," *Bulletin of the Bureau of School Service* (College of Education, University of Kentucky), Vol. X, No. 2, pp. 56-65, December, 1937.

was delusive and arrogant for man to believe that he could change the inevitable. Man was only a pawn in the hands of destiny. What was and would be had been determined, and what man should do was to try to find these eternal laws—the good, the true, and the beautiful—and to live accordingly. “To know these ideal patterns was to know the truth; to think them was to be wise; to obey them was to be virtuous; to manifest and appreciate them in the esthetic realm was to exhibit and enjoy beauty.”¹⁸

Furthermore, this philosophy of life, as interpreted by those who were strongly religious, was authoritarian and conservative. One did not reason; one accepted. The laws came down from above; those on earth could only hope to divine the truth; not find it by their own reason and experience. Furthermore, it encouraged a passive kind of living and thinking, an ivory-tower attitude. The active desire for betterment, for change, for doing things differently, for learning from experience what is good and bad were not present in this philosophy. As Ecclesiastes stated it:

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be . . . and there is no new thing under the sun.

Dr. Samuel Johnson gave this idea a familiar twist, as follows: “Those born to poverty and drudgery should not be deprived by an improper education of the opiate of ignorance.”

Kilpatrick rejected completely and unequivocally this static, fixed, predetermined universe, and withal he rejected the “closed system” approach to education—of learning as conceived in finding out eternal and unchanging laws, with its emphasis on hortatory, verbalized, authoritative doctrines, ethics, and morality; on so-called thinking, walled off from tested application; on all indoctrinations, whether they emanated from the Bible, religion, tradition, man-made institutions, folkways, or, for that matter, authoritarian textbooks.

In its stead he was to carry on a relentless, lifelong struggle to advance an education that would enthrone the free play of intelligence as it confronted experience in a novelly developing universe. He was to insist that there was no a priori truth; no ultimate truth. Whatever truth can be established comes from the freely functioning mind grappling with experience. He fought for an education that would help build up children intelligently able and experimentally able to meet novel situations in this novelly developing universe (with emphasis on thought tested out

¹⁸ W. H. Kilpatrick, “Philosophy of Education,” (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 63.

in practice); to educate children to a position where they could think situations through in terms of consequences both to themselves and to others.

Even the spiritual values of such a program were not to be foisted on the child in any authoritarian manner—"mother knows best," "do what teacher says," "do what the book says," or "the Clinton family has always done this so,"—nor on supernaturalism or dogma, but on the experimental approach. He wanted children and adults to come to spiritual values inductively, from the study of the situation; because they themselves saw clearly that cooperation, self-denial, provided an intelligent way of behaving, a method that will promote the best common good for all.

This kind of education demanded radical and revolutionary changes in the traditional school, and it was these changes that Kilpatrick advocated all the days of his life.

CHAPTER X

On the Faculty of Teachers College

SEEING an announcement of a meeting of the Southern Club, Kilpatrick was interested; and, appearing at the meeting, he looked around and saw only women present. "I didn't think much about that," he remarked. "There were more women than men in the school anyway." The chairman eyed him critically for a while, and then embarrassedly stammered, "I'm sorry; I believe you misunderstood. This is the Southern Club."

"That's why I'm here," responded Kilpatrick. Whereupon she informed him that membership in the Southern Club was confined to women exclusively.

"It didn't say that on the notice," said Kilpatrick, and with that he withdrew.

This woman was later to become his wife.

Excluded from the organization, Kilpatrick with other Southerners joined in the formation of a Southern Club for the study of that region's educational problems. In this connection, he had numerous occasions to consult with Miss Margaret Pinckney, the woman who had peremptorily dismissed him from her meeting.

He took long walks with her along the Palisades, to Fort Washington, Fort Lee, and they sat and talked on Riverside Drive benches. He noted in his diary,¹ "We discussed a most unusual book by a North Carolina mountaineer, and an article on pragmatism in the *May Atlantic*. A most enjoyable evening."

Some time later, on a Riverside Drive bench, they agreed "to be married . . . I am anxious now . . . to be settled in a new life." And on November 26, 1908, he married Miss Margaret Manigault Pinckney, the daughter of the Reverend Dr. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, at the Church of the Holy Apostles in New York. The bride came from one of

¹ Diary, February 19, 1908.

the distinguished and substantial families of South Carolina; she was a descendant of the first American ambassador to Great Britain and to Spain. During this period of his life, family meant much to Kilpatrick, and he was impressed with Miss Pinckney's family and their preeminent social position in Charleston, where they had lived for over two hundred years.

With time, Dean Russell became more favorably disposed toward Kilpatrick. When Professor MacVannel of the philosophy department showed evidence of impaired health, Dean Russell asked Kilpatrick whether he would consider staying at Teachers College or whether he had his heart set on Peabody. To which Kilpatrick replied that he would prefer Peabody, but that that institution had not been properly organized; and even more important, he had not been asked to join the faculty.

Whereupon Dean Russell proposed that, since he was already working part time for the college, he might devote the rest of his time to the Bureau of Appointments; and, said Dean Russell, if Professor MacVannel or Professor Suzzallo should leave, he would have the first call for the vacancy. Kilpatrick accepted this proposal, and he gave up his part-time teaching position at Pratt Institute.

Professor MacVannel suffered a third serious stroke that incapacitated him for teaching and Kilpatrick, in the fall of 1913, took over his courses in philosophy of education. He was now on his own, and this was what he liked best of all. His rise from this point was fairly rapid and without incident. In 1915 he was appointed to an associate professorship, and in 1918—after much travail and delay, which will be chronicled in another portion of this work—he was appointed full professor.

Now that he was on his own, his full genius as a teacher was released. His classes became centers where vital, pivotal, and controversial questions were discussed, where students engaged in heated give-and-take; so meaningful were these problems that these discussions overflowed onto the campus; and when the students returned home, they overflowed into the school faculty meetings and eventually they found "action outlets" in changed classroom procedures and methodology. His classes came to be jam-packed, not only with registered students but with friends of students and with visitors, who were attracted by the wonderful things they heard.² In 1913, he could write—and no one was more objective about such matters—as follows:

"There are three of us who stand out preeminently as teachers: Miss

² A detailed account of his classroom methodology will be found in Chapter XXIII.

Norsworthy, Prof. McMurry and I; and I don't think I suffer by comparison."³

In 1915 he wrote: "Each succeeding year I have occupied in some degree or manner a higher position in the general estimation. This year with McMurry, Thorndike and Suzzallo not here, with Monroe not popular as a lecturer, I am distinctly among the higher men in the general faculty. Again I feel I am growing. This I have experienced twice, about 15 years apart."⁴

During the summer of 1916 he had the largest enrollment of any teacher at Teachers College.

In his early days at Teachers College his love for the South was strong and intense; any good educational position in the South would have excited and enticed him. Ironically, he was in time to get many such offers, but they always came too late.

When the Peabody board finally gave the University of Georgia \$50,000 with which to start a department of education, Kilpatrick wrote in his diary: "Two years ago, I would have hailed this with delight little short of ecstasy."⁵ On a visit to White Plains, his boyhood home, he traversed over his land, declaring "I put my feet on my own land, land in which no one else has any say-so."⁶ When he read southern memoirs (a type of literature of which he was fond) or heard of any creative or intellectual stirrings in the South, he felt like a renegade and deplored the fate that brought him north. In a letter to his sister, Helen, he wrote: "The contrast between this [the North] and what I find in the South is but another reason for making me feel even more keenly than before coming here that I shall never be content to live outside of the South and least of all would I live in a big city." Even when he had "won out" and had been appointed an assistant professor, he became stirred when reading about the awakening of the South: "If only I would come in touch with men there, I would certainly feel like leaving here any minute. But I am timorous someway. My trouble at Mercer and other disappointments have made me less daring, less adventurous." As late as 1914 (he had then been seven years in the North) he was collecting material to write a history of education in Georgia.⁷

No sooner was he appointed assistant professor in 1911 than the

³ Diary, September 16, 1913.

⁴ Diary, September 22, 1915.

⁵ Diary, May 19, 1911.

⁶ Diary, September 8, 1911.

⁷ He observed that he didn't know whether he would ever get to write this book. Up to the present, he has not.

University of Wisconsin began making inquiries as to his availability as a professor of education. When Professor Charles De Garmo retired from Cornell University, this position was offered him. Kilpatrick was tempted, especially by the beauty of Cornell University environs, "where there are some real homes and some personal living." He was approached (1913) as to his availability as dean of a proposed school of education at the University of Virginia. Kilpatrick noted in his diary that, even if formally offered, he doubted whether he would accept. And the rejection of such an offer—one in the South, and one with a university which he so admired—meant that no matter how he might dally with the notion of leaving Teachers College, he would, when it came down to it, never leave.

As he wrote to his mother: "One certainly has better opportunities up here to get things done . . . Everything seems to center here. Influences go out from here. People look to TC in a way that makes life here different in point of view of opportunity from what it is further off."⁸

In 1914 the University of Illinois asked him to state his own terms for accepting a professorship there, and he wrote to his mother that he was "afraid to name a figure within reason lest the university accept it," and he was "afraid of making myself ridiculous by naming one out of reason."⁹ The university voluntarily offered the "ridiculous figure" he feared to ask, but he answered no. He wrote to his mother: "I feel that my future is assured here; and I'd rather be here than anywhere else in the North."

And then in rapid succession came calls for wider fields and for really pivotal educational posts. In 1914 the University of West Virginia offered him the presidency; he refused. And then came the offer of bright stardust, the dream of many years, the hope that had stirred him since Mercer days. He relates that Buttrick and Rose of the General Education Board asked him to dine at the Century Club and "they say President Payne is necessarily away much, and that the college suffers from the lack of a dean or vice-president, and they think I am a suitable person . . ." He expressed his appreciation, and then told them that he "must think it over." And what were the results of his thinking? "There are many attractive things about the proposition. Still I hate to leave here where the work is so congenial."¹⁰

This was his last struggle; the North and Teachers College had won out. From this point on he was to think of the South less and less, and like a hooked fish who at first struggles hard to disentangle itself and

⁸ Letter, February 5, 1911.

⁹ Letter, February 22, 1914.

¹⁰ Diary, March 24, 1917.

then subsides, Kilpatrick came, perhaps subconsciously at first, to accept the fact that his break with the South was irreparable; that his interest there was destined to be purely academic; that his strong and primary emotional ties were henceforth to be in the North, principally with Teachers College. When he was sounded out as to his availability for the presidency of Amherst College, he did not even consider the proposal seriously.

And so it was with other such offers. He loved every day he served Teachers College.

As a teacher he was almost from the first extraordinarily successful. He felt, however, chagrin and shame before his colleagues at his meager educational publications. He had published two small volumes: *The Dutch Schools of New Netherland and Colonial New York* in 1912, which subject has already been alluded to, and *The Montessori System Examined* in 1914, which will be discussed later; and he was at work on another small volume, *Froebel's Kindergarten Principles Critically Examined*. But he was not content; he wanted to make his own unique educational contributions. Up to 1914 his published work was either critical evaluations or factual compilations.

He noted in his diary on January 1, 1914:

"My success is much better as a teacher and student than as an investigator or original thinker. While I hope to become well known as a teacher and a writer, I have no reason to hope to make specific contributions to thought. Where a card index¹¹ will furnish the means, I shall succeed. In other respects the future is uncharted. Occasionally, I have an additional insight following Dewey or others; and I am able to organize perhaps above them; so that I am a little hopeful of what I may do."

Writing to him came hard and painfully, but he was determined to master this technique, and hour after hour, day after day, he kept himself at the task, although frequently discouraged and doubtful of the worth of what he was doing.

Even when he was writing the pamphlet *The Project Method*, which was to have a sale of over sixty thousand copies, and which probably had more influence on modern American education in changing and modifying classroom practice than any document yet written, Kilpatrick felt discouraged and in doubt as to the merit of what he was doing. "Spend whole

¹¹ Near at hand when he reads, he keeps 3x5 cards on which to jot down significant statements or thoughts. He has a filing system for these cards, and he constantly refers to them for writing, lecturing, or teaching purposes. They served as source material for his *Source Book in the Philosophy of Education*, first edition.

day writing on my 'project' article. . . . My writing is so slow as to be almost a failure. I am becoming increasingly concerned. . . . The uncertainty of mind which James describes is almost mine in writing. I can make an analysis in talk and I can carry this out with some vehemence and success, but writing is another matter."¹² The next day he reported that his "progress is like the frog's out of the well. Still I can see a little progress in procedure. I am so critical, however, that I am like the centipede whose self-consciousness stood in the way of his walking."¹³

Even after he had published a one-man library, with many books and hundreds of articles and pamphlets, writing for him was an enervating and excruciating experience. One late afternoon I came into his study and he showed me—distress written all over his face—the result of his day's labor—two sentences. Yet to this day, especially since his retirement, he has kept his forenoons sacred to his writing, breaking into them only for reasons of great necessity. Working hour after hour, day after day, and year after year, literally with "blood, sweat and tears," he has kept unrelentingly at his task. His enormous output of educational contributions of every sort—books, pamphlets, articles, reviews, newspaper articles—is a monument to character and self-discipline.

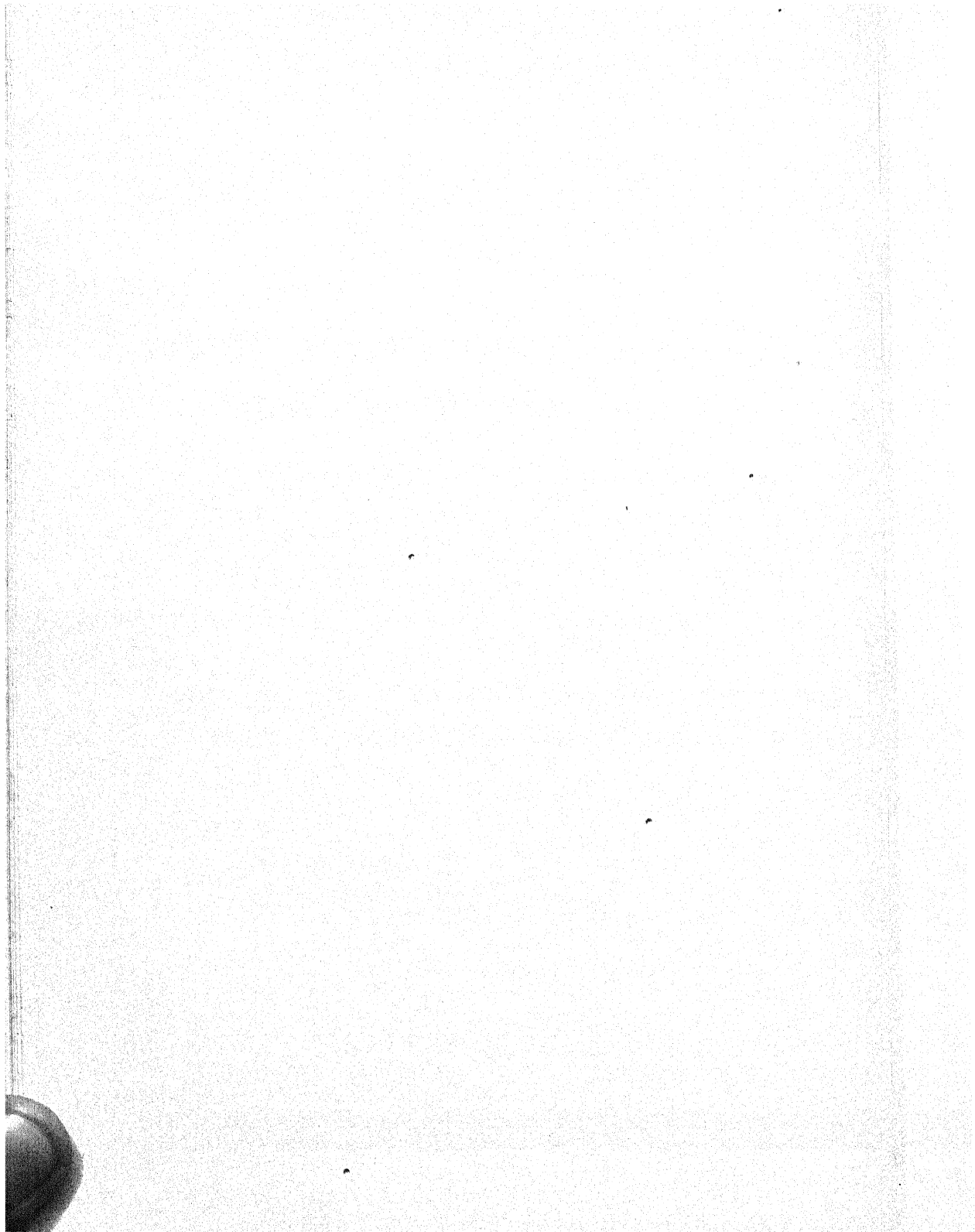
¹² Diary, April 12, 1918.

¹³ Diary, April 13, 1918.



PART III

*His Early Contributions and Criticism
of Traditional Learning*



CHAPTER XI

Madam Montessori and Natural Unfoldment

ABOUT 1910 the American public became intrigued with a new system of education; it sounded novel, radical, advanced, and like the hoped-for panacea to cure all ills. The press published articles about this system, the public attended lectures explaining the system, and learned professors of education hailed the system.

Not only were Madam Montessori's ideas receiving the normal interest that comes from novelty, but they were being aided by an American commercial syndicate which was selling her apparatus, the use of which was fundamental to her theories. In the hullabaloo, educators were made to believe that unless they bought this apparatus posthaste they could not possibly provide children with a decent education. "... the fact that this material has been patented, that infringements are threatened with suit, that no part is sold apart from the whole—all of this makes us think that this is being pushed from financial, not pedagogical motives."¹

And this led Teachers College to investigate the Montessori system, and for this purpose Professors Kilpatrick and M. B. Hillegas and Miss Annie E. Moore embarked for Italy in 1912.

Dr. Maria Montessori was the first woman physician to be graduated from the University of Rome. While working as the head of a hospital for defective children in Rome, she became interested in the education of feeble-minded and abnormal children. In her work, she was much influenced by Edward Sequin's work with the education of mental defectives and adopted a number of his procedures. Actuated by a mixture of good business and philanthropy, a realty concern with large holdings of property in a horrible slum area just beyond the walls of Rome asked

¹ Letter to his mother, April 7, 1912.

Madam Montessori, in 1907, to establish a school for children of working mothers. And this she did; the *Cora dei Bambini*, which she founded, won her a wide reputation. Her school was located in an area noted for vice, crime, disease, historic filth, and indescribable human degradation.

After studying the Montessori schools in Italy, Kilpatrick came to the conclusion that, although there were a number of admirable features in the Montessori schools, America had little to learn from her methods. In Europe, where repressive discipline and a lock-step education were in vogue, her influence was salubrious. For America, her educational thinking was "30 years behind the best of our present theory."² Furthermore, Dewey's concept of education was so much superior to Montessori's, was founded on such superior psychology and philosophy, that what she had to offer, except in minor details, was of small significance. He did absolve Madam Montessori of any questionable financial motivation, for after interviewing her he came to believe that she was lacking in any special business sense and that she was being exploited by American business interests.

When he returned from abroad his adverse criticism received extensive newspaper publicity; and because of this he received many requests from all over the country to lecture. Since the Montessori system had strong and ardent followers, especially among the lay public, he was the center of much controversy. In a book, *The Montessori System Examined*, which he published in 1914, he made a critical analysis of her theories. Montessori conceived education as the "mere unfolding from what has from the first been implicitly present."³ Somewhat like Aristotle, she maintained that in every child there is the man present, as in the acorn there is the future tree. And, hence, we must allow full freedom for a natural unfolding; there must not be any coercion or restraint, except in extreme cases.

It was true that a great deal of freedom existed in the Montessori schools, and Kilpatrick observed on his visits that there was remarkably little unruliness. He saw two boys pulling at each other's hair, but "the encounter subsided as quickly as it arose and no notice was taken of the episode by anyone."⁴ Her reliance on freedom, her desire to allow the child to work out his own salvation; her emphasis on liberty, not suppression—this held a strong appeal for Kilpatrick. The teachers did not dominate the classroom; they worked with individual children. And

² W. H. Kilpatrick, "Montessori," *Kindergarten Review*, December, 1912.

³ W. H. Kilpatrick, *The Montessori System Examined*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

children could, more or less, follow their own inclinations. If they wanted to play, they played; if they wanted to read, they read; if they wanted to work, they worked; if they wanted to do nothing, they did nothing, and there was no scolding or reprimand. The purpose behind this was to permit the child to develop naturally, to allow the "seed" to burgeon forth in its own way. This was indeed in pleasant contrast to the harsh, suppressive discipline that prevailed in many American schools.

This insistence on freedom, Kilpatrick pointed out, this wish for the child to unfold naturally, was not original. "That idea had been set forth by Rousseau about 200 years ago. It was emphasized by Pestalozzi about 150 years ago and it was emphasized by Froebel about 75 years ago."⁵ Natural unfoldment was not a sufficient or an adequate philosophy of education. "A child should be nurtured like a flower," Kilpatrick declared, "not allowed to grow up like a weed."⁶ And he added: "Following one's own sweet will does not of necessity bring either the most of knowledge or the best of conduct."⁷

The Montessori apparatus, so widely advertised, shackled the imagination, the freedom, and the initiative of children. The children had freedom—freedom of one kind—to use the Montessori apparatus exactly as they were directed. They could not use it to build a house or a wagon or a bridge, or do anything with it except as prescribed. "... This apparatus by its very theory presents a limited series of exactly distinct and very precise activities, formal in character and very remote from social interests and connections."⁸ In none of the Montessori schools did he find among the children real spontaneity, engrossing creative activities, the give-and-take that comes when children communicate for common purposes whether in play or in tasks. He observed little modeling, poor drawing, hardly any storytelling, minor dramatization.

Even more important to Kilpatrick was the fact that her prescribed tasks were remote from real life and living. Real problems arise, he wrote, "when the current of real life is for the time dammed. Under such situations, the child puts heart and soul into the situation in a genuine effort to straighten things out. It is then, if ever, that there is a training of 'mind' or 'will.'"⁹ It is the solution of real problems that sets standards and outcomes and makes it possible for the child to judge of his success and failure and to learn thereby. The child who builds a house soon

⁵ Interview, New York Globe, August 16, 1912.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *The Montessori System Examined*, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

learns whether he built well or poorly. The child who tries to drive a nail into a piece of wood soon discovers whether he has hit the head or has missed. "A pair of roller skates," points out Kilpatrick, "suggest their own problem with a minimum of explanation; they also test admirably the solution proffered. The sight of possible playmates suggests social conditioned activities. . . ." ¹⁰

The whole Montessori system was permeated by a belief in the discredited and outworn notion of formal discipline. This theory held that "if you learn to observe birds you have trained a general power of observation so that henceforth you will have observed everything better. If you go into the woods, you will better note the trees and their differences; if you take up cooking, you will observe better all the various differences of pots, pans, meats and vegetables."¹¹ In the Montessori schools the children were given pieces of cloth with holes and through them they inserted strings and laces and made knots and tied bows; they inserted buttons; they were taught to distinguish many shades of colors; to lift various weights, and the like. The children were being taught these things not to achieve mastery of the tasks set before them. The purpose was more deep seated and more ramified. The purpose was "to train their senses for life. By learning to use their senses in these specific instances she contends they will be able to use their senses more sharply in daily life."¹² Madam Montessori spoke of blindfolding the child "for the education of the senses in general, such as in the tactile, thermic, basic, and stereognostic exercises."

Kilpatrick attacked this discredited notion of formal discipline. Children can learn quicker and better how to lace shoes by lacing their shoes; how to pass a button through a hole by dressing themselves. This direct method provides better learning and is more meaningful to the child. He scoffed at the notion that after training anyone could "look out of the trained eye as through an improvised telescope."¹³ Nor do we "speak of judgment as a general power that can be trained; nor of discrimination, nor of observation."¹⁴ The best way to learn anything is to learn that thing itself, not something else. And there is little or no transfer unless the two activities "have common elements."

As proof that children did acquire "transfer of training," proponents of the Montessori system told of one of their schools, where children prepared and served their own meals, and in doing so were unusually

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Montessori and Froebel," *Kindergarten Review*, April, 1913.

¹² Interview, *New York Globe*, August 16, 1921.

¹³ *The Montessori System Examined*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

neat and accurate, not spilling or breaking any dishes. They insisted that this achievement was solely "due to the muscular control gained from the use of didactic apparatus."¹⁵ Nonsense, said Kilpatrick, it was due to the fact that children were carefully trained in these routines. Since the school catered to working mothers, the children remained there from eight to ten hours a day, and they had learned to care for themselves, washing themselves, cleaning their teeth, preparing and serving meals. This was all very desirable, since such training admirably served the needs of this low socioeconomic group. If an American school devoted the same time and effort to such instruction, the American child would do just as well in all respects. It was not the Montessori apparatus that provided the magical outcome, it was the specific instruction. Kilpatrick further maintained: The long day and the stress on personal cleanliness were altogether desirable for the children whom this school served, but that did not mean that this curriculum and these specific objectives should be made mandatory for all schools and all children. A school should serve the needs of its children, and those needs will be determined by the unique environment from which they come—their homes, the neighborhood, local industry, customs, traditions, and the like. It would be silly to concentrate on personal cleanliness when children come from homes where they have already acquired and learned such habits.

When Kilpatrick interviewed Madam Montessori, and raised this question of formal discipline, he was taken aback to discover that she was apparently not aware that it had been discarded and discredited in both Germany and America.

But his main objection to the Montessori system stemmed from the fact that it did not tap the interests, the initiative, the imagination, the creativeness of the child. Character develops when an individual adjusts purposely, actively, intelligently to meaningful environmental problems that beset every individual, including the child. Character is not merely a process of unfolding; it is a matter of growth and learning, and essential to this growth is cooperative group activities and a continuous adjustment to social demands. Such growth and development does not arise from following set routine procedures; nor from natural unfolding.

He concluded: "The same psychology that leads people to expect panaceas in medicine, even in such humbugs as electric wells . . . leads them to look favorably upon any well-advertised scheme of get-educated-quick processes."¹⁶

Time has vindicated Killpatrick in his stand against the Montessori system.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁶ Letter to his mother, October 20, 1912.

CHAPTER XII

Kilpatrick, Froebel, and Symbolism

FROM the vantage point of Dewey's philosophy and Thorndike's psychology, Kilpatrick made a critical study of Froebel, the patron saint of American kindergartners; and Kilpatrick became convinced that, although Froebel exercised a wholesome influence on education in many respects, he had been surpassed by American educators—particularly by Miss Patty Hill—and that the Froebelian influence was undesirable and even harmful. Froebel stood for what was essentially a static philosophy of education and his prescriptions and routines deadened the creative power of teachers and dulled the imagination of children. Particularly did Kilpatrick attack the symbolism and mysticism that was central and inherent in the Froebelian philosophy of education; his pantheistic, deistic attitude toward the universe.

Everything in the universe, said Froebel, is part of "one great intrinsically and spiritually coherent whole";¹ every particle of the universe is divine and a part of the whole. Typical of Froebel's lyrical passages was the following: "Whatever we little children ask, you flowers always answer."² Why does a ball exercise such a strong fascination for a child? Not because the child likes to play with a ball; not because it offers a challenge to muscular coordination; not anything so mundane as that. In the Froebel ratiocination nothing ever is so simple. "The ball is . . . for the . . . developing child . . . as the spherical form of the world is to the satisfactory insight into the system of the world."³ Why do children like circular games? For Froebel the explanation was obvious. These games "lead them towards a comprehension of the solar system and the orbital motion of the world."⁴

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, *Froebel's Kindergarten Principles Critically Examined*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1916), p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

To Kilpatrick, such mystical symbolism was neither scientific nor logical; and for the child it does not exist. "No child gathers any idea of the unity of the universe," said Kilpatrick, "by looking at a ball or playing with a ball. Neither does an adult, for that matter."

Somewhat like Aristotle and Madam Montessori, Froebel believed that the child is the seed of the man. As the seed needs the chance to grow, so the child needs only the chance to unfold. "... the man already appears and indeed is in the child with all his talents and the unity of his nature."⁵ Why is a child attracted to a watch? "... at the bottom of this pleasure," maintains Froebel, "lies a deep slumbering premonition of the value of time itself."⁶ The germ ideas lying dormant in the child become conscious in the man and the child is attracted to the appropriate symbols that will permit these germ ideas to unfold and develop. These symbols permit him to attain an adult completion, fixed and immutable in God's patterns of divine unfoldment.

Kilpatrick was at total variance with Froebel's belief that character—the essential element in all education—comes as a result of mere unfolding. To build a character "suitable for present conditions of civilization . . . we cannot allow that the element of selection lies entirely within the child. To affirm this is to reject the worth of the social environment." The child grows up in an interdependent society and he must learn to interact and adjust to this society, and to educate best for this, you need the world—institutions, playmates, parents, and, yes, teachers—not an isolated, unfolding individual. The child, said Kilpatrick, should be making active and intelligent adjustments to his immediate environment, to his present needs and his present living, since he is a social organism, not an unfolding one.

For Froebel's emphasis on freedom he had the highest respect: here Froebel made a profound contribution. The good society, Kilpatrick maintained, should allow for the maximum expression of human nature, "an ever-increasing freedom of self-expression to the child. . . . we have too many rigid desks, too many mechanical promotion schemes, too much conventional knowledge in the curriculum. We have relied overmuch on 'do this' and 'don't do this.' We need to give our children more opportunity to live free, healthy, happy normal lives. The Froebelian kindergarten has had a worthy part in preparing the public mind for this concept."⁷

He took issue with Froebel over the latter's basic concept that "there

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

is a certain course and sequence in development of all things, which the creator has followed in building up the race, and which the human being must be allowed to follow." With this in mind, Froebel had created his "gift series" to further such predetermined, sequential development. This was a most unfortunate aspect of Froebel's teaching, for the "gift series" made for a fixed and static curriculum, curbing the creative powers of both children and teachers.

Kilpatrick, however, did believe that Froebel made a lasting contribution in building up a system of education that was independent of merely "intellectual tasks." To this day, he says, no better defense of games as an educative force has ever been made. Games, Froebel declared, inculcate "justice, moderation, self-control, truthfulness, loyalty, brotherly love, and yet also strict impartiality . . . courage, perseverance, resolution, prudence . . . forbearance, consideration, sympathy and encouragement."⁸ They train the child "in the habit of association with comrades."⁹ And, said Froebel, "every town should have its common playground."¹⁰

An old man of seventy, Froebel played with little children, and the townspeople of Oberweissbach looked on in derision and called him an "old fool." In rhythm, he and the children imitated swimming fish, the wind, feeding the cattle, raking the hay.

In this, said Kilpatrick, resided Froebel's true greatness; he was the first who saw how play released children's energies; how it added unto them manifold blessings. The child is good and should not be suppressed. "Against common public opinion he rejected entirely the doctrine of total depravity."¹¹

In contrast, the following verse, sung by children as they marched into their classrooms, described the attitude then prevalent in many American schools:

We'll all take our places, and show no wry faces.
We'll all say our lessons distinctly and slow.
For if we don't do it, our teachers will know it;
And into the corner we surely must go.¹²

In another infant school, the teachers were instructed that "it must not be counted a sin for a lively girl to laugh on the playground."¹³

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

Readers Service

Froebel's emphasis on self-activity "comes wonderfully close to the best modern doctrine of interest." He told teachers to take children on nature walks, among growing things; to teach them to observe and then to talk about what they saw. He emphasized not suppression but expression, building, drawing, modeling, singing. From his great and mystical love for all living things came the powerful impetus to give children a plot of ground to prepare, sow, and harvest; to love and nurture animals and all living things. At no time, said Kilpatrick, has so elaborate an educational system ever been devised without books as its core. And, says Kilpatrick, "Perhaps the most valuable of all was Froebel's practical demonstration through his kindergarten of how happy a group of children can be when engaged in educative activity."

Kilpatrick's final verdict, however, was negative. "The modern kindergarten has children playing at things that actually interest them. They have big blocks, big enough to build houses for children to play in. They have dolls to play with; apparatus that challenges and interests children. The children genuinely play and teachers encourage genuine creative work on the part of the children. And for this change, they are indebted to Miss Patty Hill, more so than to any other person."

Miss Caroline Pratt, who founded the City and Country School, gives testimony to this point of view, in relating how she rebelled against Froebelian methodology. "I was taking a training course in kindergarten methods," she said, "and one day I found myself resenting a game in which I was supposed to be a butterfly. I had no desire to be a butterfly! I wanted to work in the shop. I don't believe children want to be butterflies, either. They want to make something important, like a bridge or an ocean liner."¹⁴

¹⁴ In an interview with Emma Bugbee, New York *Herald Tribune*, December 4, 1939.

CHAPTER XIII

Mathematics, Formal Discipline, and Reason

TO KILPATRICK, the end product of education was character and personality; and, hence, the crucial educative issues were social and moral. Mathematics had little in it to serve the needs and interests of children, or for that matter grownups. It was a game and a puzzle. The only way that its traditional teaching could be defended was on the basis of the old faculty psychology, namely, that aspects of the mind could be trained and sharpened, and this resultant keener mind would be ready to serve the individual whenever the need arose. To illustrate: according to this theory, music improved the aesthetic senses: hence, music instruction was not important for itself; it was a means to an end. The person who studied music was more sensitive—not merely to music—but to all aesthetic aspects of living, architecture, literature, drama; the clothes he wore, the home in which he lived, the human relationships that he formed. Latin was alleged to develop logical thinking; hence, the student of Latin need not be so much concerned about what he learned from Latin directly, since Latin helped him become more logical minded in all aspects of his living. It was because mathematics was supposed to improve reasoning power that educators placed such stress on the subject.

Kilpatrick, as a student under Thorndike, early renounced this theory, for it was Thorndike whose pioneer work in the field did much to explode the myths connected with faculty psychology or transfer of training. Thorndike denied that any subject had special disciplinary powers. What carries over are the identical elements in two situations. One could not improve a faculty such as reasoning and then have this improved reasoning operate in diverse situations. Psychologists began to investigate transfer of training and an avalanche of studies served to indicate that no subject has any unique or special powers of mental discipline. Any subject could

be so studied that an individual got discipline out of it, but there was no special virtue in mathematics that cooking or shopwork or any other subject could not equal.

All subjects make demands on the individual. To illustrate with a subject regarded with some disdain by academicians, to wit, cooking: in order to master cooking one has to learn to follow a recipe and combine exactly the right amounts of ingredients, mix them exactly the right way, cook exactly the right time, etc. Furthermore, if a student liked cooking and disliked mathematics, his positive and desirable learnings and his positive and desirable transfer, in terms of increased abilities in other directions, would be considerably greater through the study of cooking than through the study of mathematics. It has now been established by psychologists that the best way to learn anything is to learn that thing directly. If a student wants to increase his English vocabulary he should study English, not Latin. If he wants to become a bookkeeper he should study bookkeeping and arithmetic fundamentals, not algebra and geometry. One should study the things one wants to learn, not something else, for this direct learning will provide the best, quickest, and most efficient results.

When a subject appears to have great powers of transfer—that is, students of this subject seem better able to master other subjects or situations—it generally means that bright students have been attracted to that subject, and since they have better intelligence they naturally do better when competing with students with inferior intelligence. At one time Latin students were held up as examples of this powerful “transfer”; they had larger vocabularies, they did better in English, they mastered foreign languages better. They did better not because they had studied Latin; they had better minds to begin with, and their study of Latin had little to do with any of this. Now that the best students are being attracted to the study of science, we are beginning to hear about the wonders of science as a study to improve the mind.

With Thorndike’s findings as background, Kilpatrick’s views regarding the value of mathematics can be more clearly understood. In 1915 he was asked by the N. E. A. Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education to form a committee to study the problem of the teaching of mathematics in the high schools. As a premise, Kilpatrick took the position that no subject should be included in any curriculum for its mental disciplinary power.

Every subject should justify itself because it is useful to the student, and it should be taught for no other reason. “No longer should the force of tradition shield any subject from scrutiny. . . . In probably no study

did this older doctrine of mental discipline find larger scope than in mathematics, in arithmetic to an appreciable extent, more in algebra, most of all in geometry."¹

Furthermore, our knowledge of individual differences makes it clear that not all students should or ought to study the same things. "... other things being equal," Kilpatrick declared, "any item is more readily learned if its bearing and needs are definitely recognized."² Algebra, geometry, and trigonometry "should be thought in connection with solving of problems in fields where the pupils already have both knowledge and interest. . . . A content thus instrumentally selected will, on the one hand, be free of the old formal puzzles, the complex instances, the verbal problems which in the past have wasted so much time and destroyed so much potential interest, and will, on the other hand, run across the divisions hitherto separating algebra, geometry and trigonometry."³

Since the whole theory of mental discipline had been exploded, it was time that educators took cognizance of this and came to realize that mathematics as taught in our schools was responsible for much harm. Educators should stop thinking in terms of classical tradition and should view the whole situation afresh and do what was intelligent and wise.

For the general high school student—the great majority who never went on to college—Kilpatrick advanced the revolutionary proposal that the study of algebra and geometry be dropped "except as an intellectual luxury"; it should be regarded in the same fashion and in the same spirit as a young person learning chess; it was only an interesting pastime.

Kilpatrick wanted "no caste-like perpetuation of economic and cultural differences," and the knowledge of mathematics, he suggested, was used as a badge of superiority—to intimidate and awe those who were ignorant of the subject, somewhat as those who wore the color tie of exclusive English public schools impressed those who didn't.

There might be, he granted, some value in teaching mathematical concepts, such as squares, right angles, geometric figures, "and perhaps play around with an equation just for the fun of it." But all this should be done informally, not in the classical, logical tradition that has come down to us. For vocational students—those who are preparing to be machinists, plumbers, sheet-metal workers—the curriculum should center around a practical arithmetic essential to their needs and to their work.

Even for prospective engineers and technological students, educators

¹ "The Problem of Mathematics in Secondary Schools," Department of the Interior Bulletin No. I, 1920.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

should reexamine existing courses "to see what they lack and what they include that is useful for this group."⁴ For this group, he admitted, the existing courses might be more defensible, but even here the courses have been arranged, not out of psychological experiences and growth, but rather with traditional logical arrangement. Instead of teaching logical sequences—again set up by tradition—students should acquire mathematical insight and concepts in a more meaningful context, while working at meaningful practical problems, to wit, surveying, building, and the like. It is mathematics learned while serving practical needs that offers the most fruitful prospects for permanence and for enriching life.

For elementary school children, formal mathematics is an abomination; it creates meaningless verbalism and robs children of an intelligent insight into mathematical concepts.⁵ At least until the sixth grade, children will learn more and better mathematics in the normal course of living, while playing games, while making costumes for a play, while doing shopwork, while calculating the cost of a luncheon, while following recipes in cooking, while reckoning the cost of a proposed trip, etc.

In an address before the students of the University of Florida, he said: "We have in the past taught algebra and geometry to too many, not too few. Algebra and mathematics based on algebra are essential to civilization, but practically useless to most citizens. Let us not in this connection be deceived by claims of 'mind training'; that is an outworn discarded theory."⁶ Even for college graduates all that remains as a residue of their mathematics is a few formulas and three or four mathematical concepts.

Lumping mathematics with Latin and physics, he said: "There is little practical value to warrant the time spent on them. Mental discipline is not justified for teaching them or any other subject."⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ How farfetched and formalized was the mathematical teaching of children can be gathered from this story told by Kilpatrick. A teacher assigned this problem to her class:

"You want to lay a walk 8 feet wide and 20 yards long and the gate is 6 feet high. Asphalt costs so much a square yard. How much will it cost to lay the walk?"

The father of one of the children called up at 10:30 that night and said: "You know, I could work that problem if you hadn't told me how high the gate was."

⁶ His distaste for formal mathematics can be seen in his comments while helping his daughter, Margaret, with the subject. They are culled from his diary.

"Help Margaret in factoring, a waste of time if there ever was. I chafe under it." January 20, 1916.

"I am ashamed of my colleagues that they insist on such a subject." January 23, 1916.

⁷ Asked if he felt the same way about foreign languages, he answered, yes, in regard to most foreign languages and especially Latin and Greek. "When I went to school practically every prospective college student studied Greek, and when I first

Anyone who has any acquaintance with education knows how formal, traditional mathematics, coming down to us via textbooks through the centuries, has darkened the lives of students at every level of education. Kilpatrick tells the story of a lawyer he had engaged in the South who proved to be most capable and able. Getting to know him better, he recognized him as a former student whom he had failed in mathematics at Mercer University, and because of this the young man was never graduated from college.

"I had chosen some things," said Kilpatrick, "in math that interested me and I tried to make the Mercer boys learn what they had no use for. I could not and I cannot now by any stretch of the imagination believe that any but the smallest number could find any practical use for what I was teaching. And there I was at Mercer pushing this good boy—he was able as evidenced by his work for me as a lawyer—right out of college because he didn't learn those things that I liked. I have felt badly about this ever since."

Another strong motivating factor in Kilpatrick's stand against mathematics stemmed from his analysis of what constitutes desirable thinking. The study of mathematics, he maintains, is harmful rather than helpful to the kind of thinking necessary in ordinary living. Mathematics, he points out, is deductive; it starts out with a priori concepts and rules. Geometry, for instance, starts out with axioms which the student accepts, and then he works within that framework to deduce his conclusion; it is a closed system.⁸ In ordinary life we cannot reason that way; we cannot start with general principles that have to be accepted. In ordinary life thinking is inductive, not deductive. We start with a problem; we don't know what's true and what isn't; we don't know what to do or how to do it. And what do we do? We gather all the facts related to the problem and we say, this seems to be the best solution to our difficulty. If it works then it is good; if it doesn't, we examine the situation again, we study the problem anew, and we try something else, another tentative solution. Of course,

began to teach, I soon came to believe that it was an utter waste of time for most people. The effort, energy and time can be expended more profitably elsewhere. There are linguistically gifted people for whom the study of languages is profitable. But even for them, I begrudge the time it takes to master the language. If it could be done quickly and easily, and if they could begin the study of literature or whatever else they plan to do with the language, my objection would not be so strong."

Asked if this applied to modern languages, he said that "it holds in less degree" because they are quicker and easier to learn, but he still believed that for the average student it was a great waste of time. In terms of rich, vital interests that might lead to individual growth, languages offer meager possibilities.

⁸ Communism, Thomism, Aristotelianism, Platonism, he says, also are closed systems and hence they also hinder thinking.

in trying to get at a solution we use all the experiences and knowledges we have; this something worked last time and this something didn't; this person tried something and this other person tried something else. But always there is this sense of experimentation, this stab in the dark. In mathematics the problem is given, the rules are laid down; and within this closed universe the answer is worked out on an a priori basis. That is not the kind of thinking that goes on in the practical, everyday affairs of life; it is not in any way like the kind of thinking that the businessman, the journalist, the teacher, the minister, the lawyer and the engineer, or anyone else does in solving the everyday practical affairs of living.

His report, *The Problem of Mathematics in the Secondary Schools*, was vigorously opposed by the conservatives, who were shocked at the nonchalant manner in which Kilpatrick had handled their scholarly fetish. Professor Judd, of the University of Chicago, a powerful figure in educational circles, neither accepted Kilpatrick's philosophy of education nor his approach, and in all ways showed his irritation and disapproval. "Judd's objection was so strong," Kilpatrick reminisces, "that Professor Walter Jessup, who was then head of the Department of Education of Iowa State, severed his connection with the committee" so as not to antagonize him. At Teachers College, Dr. David Eugene Smith, who was professor of mathematics, became a strong foe of the report and succeeded in dissuading the Commission on the Reconstruction of Secondary Education from publishing it. Kilpatrick concedes that for Professor Smith "it was a greater strain to discard the subject than for me." It was eventually published by Dr. P. P. Claxton, United States commissioner of education, an old friend of Kilpatrick's.

Mathematics as a subject and a discipline is no longer the fetish it was; it is becoming more and more accepted as a functional subject, not a mental discipline. Educators are beginning to look askance at the puzzles and brain twisters, accumulated year after year by pedants and puzzle lovers, that served as a basic subject for hundreds of years; a subject that darkened the lives of innocent little boys and girls, as they struggled with this mass of intricate nonsense that had no meaning at all in terms of their living, their experiencing, their daily needs. And yet it was these puzzles and these intricate games that not only terrorized children, but in the colleges and the universities they ruined and blighted the academic and professional careers of young men and women. It is taking a long time for the sanctity of mathematics as a discipline to tarnish. But the chains of tradition and custom are breaking, and their hold is becoming less and less secure.

CHAPTER XIV

Two Thousand Years of Traditional Education

BETWEEN the years 1918 and 1926 there came from the pen of Dr. Kilpatrick an avalanche of books and articles that was to have far-reaching effects on the course of education in America and in the world; the writings were so profoundly to change educational practice and theory as to create as sharp a cleavage among educators as did the germ theory of Louis Pasteur among doctors. Educational theory and practice, thereafter, like Humpty-Dumpty, could never be put together and made the same. Educators, henceforth, were never to believe the same, think the same, act the same. Even those who disagreed and shouted that this which Kilpatrick advocated was evil and a menace had to take these new ideas into account and had to defend their old ideas; and in the process they themselves changed; and, willy-nilly, they had to modify their own practices and philosophy. Somewhat like Martin Luther and his ninety-nine theses or Thomas Paine and his book, *Common Sense*, Kilpatrick came out full blast against traditional educational practices, first, in an article published in 1918 in the *Teachers College Record*, entitled, "The Project Method: the Use of the Purposeful Act in the Educative Process," then in a series of articles published in 1921-1924 in the *Journal of Educational Method*, which he later incorporated in a book, *Foundations of Method*, and then, later, in a book, *Education for a Changing Civilization*. After these publications, the controversy raged strong and furious, dividing educational groups, creating educational divisions, which in politics have come to be known as the left and the right, and which in education eventually assumed the nomenclature "Progressive" and "Essentialist."

Before we can gain an insight into Kilpatrick's contributions we should have some notion of the traditional school system of the time, its funda-

mental principles, its drives, its *modus vivendi*. Only as we understand the damage done to children's personalities, the twisted and warped lives that resulted from traditional school practices, only then can we appreciate how illuminating, how healing, how truly revolutionary were Kilpatrick's contributions; how much he did to enrich children's lives; how he broadened the very foundation of education, making it as wide and pervasive as life itself.

Not only did he advocate a philosophy of education that emancipated children, but it also freed teachers of petty tyrannies, of taking orders from authoritarian supervisors. He held up for teachers a vision of a noble profession. Just as he wanted children to be intelligent, creative, self-directing individuals, so he demanded that teachers also be self-directing, creative participants in a democratic task.

His philosophy broke down the hierarchic walls, walls that separated teachers from principals, principals from superintendents, superintendents from members of boards of education, teachers from children, educators from parents. Since we are living in a democratic community and since democracy provides the best opportunity for individual and social growth, he insisted that all aspects of the learning process—the administration and organization of every process of learning—should be democratic in nature. Every area in the community should share in this common educational enterprise. Will mistakes be made? Perhaps in the short run more than if all were done in an authoritarian fashion—by experts and by fiat and order. But what better way was there to learn; what other way? Mistakes are part of learning and essential in learning. What better long-run way can anyone devise by which educators—and, yes, children—can become active participants in a democratic society? Education, he said, was an unending process, never stopping, lasting as long as life, for adults as well as for children; the whole purpose of life was growth—doing things better all the time—personal growth, community growth, national growth, world growth, and its concomitant purpose was to create an ever-better, ever-richer, ever-finer living and social environment for living. Shopkeepers, housekeepers, factory workers, doctors, engineers, writers, painters, journalists, public officials, community service organizations—and children—should constantly be learning so as to achieve these ends. Education, he said, was any act carried through with intelligence and with critical evaluation. What better way to educate a child for life in action than by making every school a miniature society in which this good life is lived?

In evaluating Kilpatrick's work, Dean Melby of New York Uni-

versity aptly said: "Kilpatrick influenced the lives of more teachers and children than any person who has lived in this generation. There isn't a child who hasn't been influenced by his living. Even teachers who are not given to progressive education behave and teach and think differently because Kilpatrick has lived."¹

In the typical classroom of Kilpatrick's day there went on a passive kind of education, in which there was no doing, no making, no thinking; its main emphasis was on regurgitation, on testing the quality, degree, and accuracy of this regurgitation. It was reminiscent of the Japanese fishermen who attached a string to a cormorant and then allowed the bird to roam in the water for fish. When he had filled his pouch, the fisherman pulled him back and made him disgorge. The emphasis that permeated the traditional school was recitation, memorization, recall, testing, grades, promotion, and failure. And for this kind of education it was necessary that children primarily listen, sit quiet and attentive in seats, try to fix in their minds what the teacher told them, commit to memory the lessons assigned to them, and then, somewhat like the cormorant, be ready at all times to disgorge the intake. The content that the child was required to memorize, recall, and recite upon was authoritatively set forth as truth and fact. There was little questioning and little disagreement. As an old Swedish writer stated it: "The teacher gathers the fruit from the tree of knowledge, chews it, and the greatest virtue in the pupil is to swallow it easily and readily."

The story is told of John Dewey who sought equipment for his experimental school at Chicago. He went from one furniture house to another, but he could not find what he wanted. Finally, one dealer, more perceptive than the others, said: "You want something in which children can work. All our chairs are for those who listen."

The emphasis in schools throughout the land was on quiet, attentive, and rigid listening. A story illustrating this attitude was told to Kilpatrick by a principal who was particularly proud of the disciplinary power of his sixth-grade teacher; in fact, her fame had extended to the entire district. When the principal visited this teacher's room, there was a deathly silence; the teacher was busy writing and did not look up. "And all the pupils were writing, except one," related the principal. "This boy had his hand raised. Being busy herself, the teacher did not see the raised hand. The principal stood in the room for perhaps five minutes. Finally, he tiptoed to the boy and whispered, 'What do you wish?' The boy said, 'I want permission to pick up my pencil; I dropped it.'"

¹ Told to the writer in an interview.

This sort of teacher was accounted an ideal disciplinarian, and it was this sort of discipline that teachers, by and large, tried to achieve.²

No one has so brilliantly explained the animating force, the *raison d'être*, that underlies traditional school practice, as did Kilpatrick. It was he who perceived why the mastery and regurgitation of a textbook—the base of the formal educative process—held such a crucial, pervasive, and dominant position in Western education. Primarily, he said, it emanated from the Platonic-Aristotelian concept of the world. Plato held that knowledge was inborn; that ideas were patterns and these patterns—inborn in man—were the only real and true realities. The material world—body and action—were frictional hindrances that clouded the real truth; it was Plato who set up a sharp dichotomy between the material—the false—and the spiritual—the true. These truths—the only real reality—were laid up in heaven, unchanging, fixed, and eternal. These truths existed intact in the mind of every human being, and all that was necessary was that they should be drawn out, “*educated*.” Descartes explained this point of view as follows: If you delve in the mind, you will “find lying underneath all accumulated data of experience certain irreducible and original truths, upon which all real knowledge must rest, and from which one may derive deductively as many particular items of knowledge as one may, through human limitations, be able to follow up.” Descartes went on to say: “The mind is logical and earth is logically hung together,” and hence all truth can be derived by deduction. Aristotle declared that the child was to the man what an acorn was to the oak; in the child were all the potentialities, fixed and predetermined, of the fully developed man.

Hence, the emphasis was on deduction, learning truths by an *a priori* method, as opposed to induction, learning by experiences, by testing and trying out in practice. The final recourse of what was or was not to be believed resided in an authoritative book, from which no deviation was permissible. For two thousand years this kind of education was dominant in our civilization.

Kilpatrick has called this the Alexandrian method, for it was transmitted to the Western world from that city. The Ptolemies sought to make Alexandria the intellectual center of the world, and for that pur-

² In commenting on this story, Kilpatrick said: “That is the silliest kind of character building that anybody could imagine for America. We don’t want docile pupils to wait to be told what to do. We want people who are intelligent enough to know that when a pencil drops, they should pick it up without asking permission. We want to build self-directing characters, and this illustrated exactly the reverse. Such an education may be good for an authoritarian society, where docility and obedience are the requisites, certainly it is not good for a democracy.”

pose assembled there the greatest library of ancient times and established a university which became famous for its researches in mathematics and science. In philosophy and literature, they had to admit defeat, for the literature of Athens was so overpowering, so overwhelming that they could not equal it. They, therefore, imported these masterly works and founded a school for their study, with the emphasis on uncritical mastery by students. Several centuries later, the Roman conquerors brought back to Rome these Greek classics, and this conception of school served as the basis for Roman education. Thus the book became entrenched as the dominant form of education throughout the Roman Empire. The Christians adopted the same educational methods to inculcate their authoritative doctrines. This emphasis on the book as a base of education continued through the Middle Ages. With the revival of learning, this method of instruction seemed peculiarly fit and right, since the main emphasis of the Renaissance was on classical learning and classical literature.

"For these schoolmen," said Kilpatrick, "the greatest written authority duly authenticated constituted generally the actual if not stated final resource to tell what to believe and teach. Any formal discussion would begin to lay down certain principles counted to be axiomatic and 'self-evident' and proceeding therefrom, as we say *a priori*, that is, by deductive reasoning from these self-assumed self-evident principles."³

To illustrate: Aristotle, who had arranged the extant knowledge of his day, was regarded as the period's foremost thinker and authority; and his writings served as a text and as a frame of reference. Galileo, who invented the telescope, focused his instrument on the sun and—lo and behold!—he saw spots on it; and this vastly disturbed the scholars of his day, for the sun was supposed to be perfect, without blemish. Thereupon, a learned professor calmly disposed of the matter thiswise: "You need not be troubled. I have read Aristotle from cover to cover three times, and he nowhere mentioned sun spots, so that there is no truth to the idea."

And for him and the learned men of his time this effectively disposed of the problem.

This fixed, closed, authoritarian system of education perfectly fitted the needs of a static religion, a static church, a static caste system, a static economic system. It fitted perfectly "a religious theory that the Deity has fixed in detail and for all time the right and wrong of all social forms and practices." Institutions were not historical developments to serve the needs of man, but they too had come down to man from God.

³ *Philosophy of Education*, appeared in the original draft of the manuscript.

In this intricate and divine mosaic, rulers, officials, parents, and children played frozen, fixed roles. From this thinking came not only the "divine right of kings," but also a fixed and "divine" relationship between master and worker. "The Bible has thus been used," said Kilpatrick, "to support autocratic government, slavery, man's rule over woman, the inviolability of property rights, the wisdom of whipping children, the severity of the penal code." And "... Newtonian science with its fixed and final laws to govern us has often looked in the same direction. . . . For institutions get their form with right and obedience from outside of man and apart from result and experience."⁴

Such thinking was reflected in educational procedure. What better way was there to prepare the child, born in sin and naturally depraved, for this preordained and fixed world than by a process of indoctrination of these "self-evident" and "eternal" truths. The child's understanding, reasoning, feelings, and experiences did not matter nor did they affect the educational process. Education was static and reactionary, emphasizing revealed truth as found in Aristotle or in the Bible or in other accepted authority. Education was essentially a preparation for adult life, and it was totally divorced from the child's present life. Even the adult was not supposed to function as a reasoning, critical human being; his lot was to accept, to understand, and to be able to defend prevailing dogmas. Education, hence, became inevitably linked to indoctrination, memorization, acceptance, and obedience. The authoritative textbook eventually became the altar at which education worshiped.

Says Kilpatrick: "... Some 300 years ago, teachers did not think it necessary for the young to understand what they learned; understanding, they thought, would come later. Thus before Comenius boys began the study of Latin in a grammar itself written in Latin. This they learned by heart—rote memory if ever there was an instance of it—not understanding at first a single word. As late as 1845, Bullion's 'English Grammar' said, 'Memorize first, then understand.'"⁵ For two thousand years, until the advent of Pestalozzi, who emphasized action and sense experience, the authoritative textbook education flourished and grew strong roots in Western civilization, as in most other parts of the world.⁶

⁴ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Social Factors Influencing Educational Method in 1930," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 4:483-490, April, 1931.

⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Education We Need—New Versus the Old," *Childhood Education*, September, 1946.

⁶ In America, says Kilpatrick, the textbook kind of education has been especially strong. In Germany, teachers frequently lectured. In America, the teachers were not so well prepared and were ignorant, and hence they tended to concentrate on an official textbook.

On this base rested the hitherto prevailing system of education. It is still essentially the dominant influence in elementary and secondary schools and in liberal arts colleges.⁷

This traditional textbook kind of education was drab and dreary; it hardly ever enlisted the enthusiasm of students; more often, it made for indifference. In too many instances, school tasks were regarded as chores to be got over with as fast as possible; and in many instances, more than educators like to admit, this kind of education twisted, corroded, and warped the lives of children, creating truants and delinquents and personal maladjustments; and it made of childhood a period of despair and torture. For in these schools there was no interest in the wholesome development of the whole child, in his growth, in his ethical, communal, or familial adjustments. It was concerned primarily and almost solely with the child's mastery of subject matter; and, as a concomitant, it was drenched with elaborate techniques and devices to measure the amount of mastery, and to honor and award prizes to the successful; and to heap ridicule and make social pariahs of those who failed to reach set standards.

The curriculum to be learned was seldom devised by the teacher who drilled it into pupils; it came to him authoritatively, in textbooks and in syllabuses. "It was handed down to the teacher by somebody higher up," says Kilpatrick, "and he had to teach one portion this week, another the next, and another the next; everything was mapped out in advance. Even if he wanted, he could not change this curriculum to meet the needs and the interest or the capacities of the children. Practically all the teacher could think about or was interested in was to implant this subject matter in the child so that he could recite on it and pass questions based on it. If the principal or superintendent gave uniform tests at the end of the term, he would check the marks of one fifth-grade teacher against those of the other fifth-grade teachers; and under such circumstances you could be certain that these teachers would leave out everything that counted in a child's life—his character, his attitude, his feelings—and concentrate on formal knowledge, the facts and skills that he thought would be tested. And these formal facts meant little to the child, in terms of his interest and present living."

In the classroom, the teacher was the center of authority; all activity, all judgment of right and wrong emanated from him. He tested, he marked, he promoted; the pupil's main job was to listen, obey, learn assigned lessons, recite, and pass examinations creditably on the questions he propounded.

⁷ Because of the influence of Dewey and Kilpatrick, the textbook hold on education has been somewhat weakened in our elementary schools.

As an earlier writer expressed it: "The teacher's authority is absolute, must be imperative, rather than deliberative or demonstrative. His requirements and decisions, in whatever form presented, whether that of request, command, or mandate, must be unargued. What he resolves upon and pronounces law, should be simply and steadily insisted upon as right *per se*, and should be promptly and fully accepted by the pupils as right, on the ground that the teacher, as such, is governor."⁸

Although the teacher in the traditional school was akin to the Prussian drillmaster, it would be unfair to ascribe the pain and harm he unwittingly inflicted to antisocial or sadistic traits. In most instances the teacher was animated by noble and idealistic purposes. He himself was a victim and was caught up inextricably in the meshes of a system that caused pain, failure, frustration. His own life, too, was all too frequently drab, unhappy, and unfortunate. Even though he might cause pain, he did it to help the child; he did it for the child's own ultimate good; of that he was certain. As a group, the teachers were sincere, idealistic, and honorable. Their tragedy was that they worshiped false gods.

They believed, and this most sincerely, that they were preparing the child for future, adult living. If the child, in the process, was unhappy, if at times the procedure seemed cruel, what better preparation could there be for actual adult living; for was not the adult world—the real world they were to face—cruel, painful, competitive, unfeeling, ungenerous; awarding honors and prizes to the successful and striking down unmercifully the failure?

In this classroom there was little kindness, sympathy, and understanding. If the child could not master the assigned intellectual tasks, the teacher attributed this failure not to inability but to perversity, laziness, or indifference. You must remember that the teacher believed that this subject which he was teaching was necessary for a happy, successful adult life; and that the child, by not learning, was jeopardizing his whole future existence. And to save him from his own self, the schools and the teacher developed elaborate techniques to intimidate the child, to dishonor him in his own home and before the community. I have seen teachers, who were normally tolerant, decent, and kindly, become in the classroom prison wardens, dictators, sadists; and yet I have the greatest sympathy for them, for their motives were nearly always the noblest and loftiest. As Dr. Johnson said: "My schoolmaster beat me most unmercifully, else I had done nothing. . . . Children not being reasonable can be governed only by fear. To impress this fear is therefore one of the first duties of those who have the care of children."

⁸ F. S. Jewell, *School Government* (New York: Barnes, 1866), p. 54.

Speaking of school learning, Oliver Goldsmith said: "It will at first be extremely disagreeable . . . and I know of no passion capable of conquering a child's natural laziness but fear."

Shakespeare was undoubtedly quite accurate when he spoke of ". . . the whining schoolboy . . . creeping like a snail unwillingly to school."

If one examined the public school curriculum one could perceive how unrealistic and meaningless it was, both to the child and to the teacher; how remote it was from living or doing or making; it stressed drab, dry husks of encyclopedic information, which were set down in an examination and which the child could then quickly forget without hurt or loss to anybody. It stressed such bits of information as the boundaries of nations, the exports of countries, the campaigns of the War of 1812, the capital of Honduras, the Peloponnesian Wars, the Latin verbs that take the dative case, "the square of the sum of two numbers equals the sum of their squares plus twice their product," compound interest and bank discount, where the Tiber River rises and in what direction it flows, "a gerund is a neuter verbal noun used in oblique cases of the singular and governing the same case as the verb," the battles and the campaigns of the Civil War. In this curriculum there was no real living, no purposing, none of the normal activities that engage the hearts and souls of boys and girls; the emphasis was on attentive listening, on the mastery of textbook assignment, on sitting fixedly in immovable desks from nine to three. Even in literature there was no reading for pleasure or appreciation; the emphasis was on dissection, analysis, and preparation for examinations. George Bernard Shaw showed keen penetration indeed when he interdicted the use of any of his works for school purposes. "I lay my eternal curse on whosoever shall now or at any time make school books out of my works and make them hated as Shakespeare is hated. My plays were not designed as instruments of torture."⁹

In mathematics the emphasis was not on logical understanding but on technical mastery, as if every child was being prepared to become an engineer or a teacher of mathematics. Even in music the students were drilled in the technical phases, not to love music.¹⁰ School was a serious place, where one learned to prepare for a grueling and soul-testing adult life. I remember a teacher going into a temper tantrum because a child—he happened to be a dull child—could not do an example with 376 as a

⁹ Quoted in *Saturday Review of Literature*, July 22, 1949.

¹⁰ One irate teacher, presiding at a school assembly, shouted: "You act as if you came here to enjoy yourself. It's got to stop." And then she proceeded to drill them on note reading and note singing.

denominator of a fraction. When I attempted to point out to her that this child—three terms retarded—would never have occasion to make use of such a fraction in real life, that what he needed was kindness and sympathy, and some tasks at which he could be successful, the teacher became indignant as though I were suggesting that she betray youth. "What will happen when this child grows up; how will he manage?"

"How often have you had the occasion to use a fraction with so large a denominator?"

She thought hard and long, and then said triumphantly, several occasions, once when she had to do statistics in a measurement course and several other times when she had to do her own examples. Thoroughly suspicious of me, this good woman returned to her classroom, determined to continue with the same old unshakable ardor to do her duty by youth, so as to provide it—even though youth be miserable while undergoing the process—with those many wonderful things which might come in handy when youth grew up.

Because the curriculum had such little meaning and interest for children, and because they learned subject matter for which they were not ready or which they could not understand, no matter how hard they tried, the traditional school was replete with verbalization. Children used words and said things of which they did not have the slightest comprehension.

Once, in a fifth-grade class, I questioned the children about the earth's rotation on its axis; the children glibly repeated what they had learned, and outwardly, it would seem, they understood. Did the earth actually have an axis, like the axle of a wheel of an automobile? Of course. When I tried to disabuse them of that notion, they refused to believe the entire business. Why did Columbus discover America? He was looking for a northwest passage to India. Why? In order to find spices. What are spices? They did not know. When they were told, the children looked bewildered, as if to say only an idiot would go to all that trouble for pepper, cinnamon, and cloves. Ask a class of children about the various zones. They will glibly recite Torrid, Temperate, and Frigid. Unfurl a map and point to the dividing lines of these zones. First, ask if there is actually a demarcation on the earth when you cross a zone. Listen to the response; you will probably be astonished. And then ask the class—even a high school group if it isn't a bright group—what kind of weather they have here. Point to a spot on the map just below the dividing line that separates the Torrid from the Temperate Zone. "It is hot—very hot." Why? "It's in the Torrid Zone, of course." Now point to a spot on the

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map just above the dividing line. "What sort of weather have they here?" "Cool; nice and cool." Why? "It's in the Temperate Zone."

I have gone into fourth-, fifth- and even sixth-grade classes and have put down two numbers, one underneath the other, and asked the class to add them up, and I have always found quite a number who subtracted. When questioned, they said: "You can't add two numbers; that's a take-away example." If I had insisted that they could be added, I would not have helped them in any way, for thereafter they would insist on adding everything, subtraction examples as well as addition examples. For many of these children there is no comprehension of process or of meaning. These things are done by rote.

In a fifth-year class, I asked when Columbus discovered America. They were eager to answer. I wrote the number 1492 on the board, very clearly, and then I asked, "What year is this?" Again, a strong onrush of hands. I put that number on the board horizontal to the first number but some distance away. How old, then, is America, if you regard Columbus' discovery as the birth of America? Now the class looked puzzled. They could not comprehend what it was all about. After some urging, the answers came—a hundred years, a thousand years, a billion years, five hundred billion years. No insight, no understanding. Using a similar procedure, you could ask the class when the Declaration of Independence was signed. The response would come quickly and correctly. And then ask the class, "About how old is America as an independent nation—in round numbers?" Again puzzlement, and again wild guessing: a million years, a billion years, a hundred years.¹¹

The pathetic effort of children to put meaning into what is for them so much gibberish leads at times to ludicrous outcomes. Books have been written of student "boners"; and they would be funny if they did not have such sad implications. A child reads "organize" as "orange"; a child sang "My country is a tree."¹² When a teacher described the equator as an "imaginary line running around the earth," a child in answer to a question, wrote as follows: "The equator is a menagerie lion running around the earth." Another child wrote that the "American Revolution corresponded to the French Revolution." Other such instances are: "A budget is a very useful instrument in the kitchen." "All conservatives are radicals and should be jailed."¹³ In an investigation made of the comprehension of

¹¹ For this procedure, I am indebted to L. P. Benezet, superintendent of schools of New Hampshire, who, upon discovering this lack of mathematical insight in young children, postponed all formal arithmetic instructions until the sixth grade.

¹² Gertrude Hildreth, "The Difficulty Reduction Tendency in Perception and Problem Solving," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 32, 1941.

¹³ H. K. Newburn, "The Relative Effect of Two Methods of Vocabulary Drill on Arithmetic in American History," *University of Iowa Studies in Education*, Vol. IX, No. 1, 1934.

eighth-grade children of social study concepts in American history, the investigator concludes: "The children's concepts of the Supreme Court were varied and inadequate. Some children knew that it was the highest court in the land but they could not tell what was meant by the highest court. Some knew how many justices there are in the court but few could tell just what they do. Others were not able to tell what sort of cases were tried in this court. Only one or two children were able to explain how cases go to this court by appeal."¹⁴

A classic example of this verbalism is the story of the boy who was kept after school because he had erred in a grammatical construction. He wrote one hundred times, "I have gone." Completing his task, he left this note for his teacher: "I have done what you told me and now I have went home."

The Division of Examination and Testing of the New York State Education Department recently compiled boners made by high school students on recent state Regents examination, and here again we observe the sorry verbalism that is an inevitable concomitant of traditional education.¹⁵

He tried in vain and was successful.

The initiative is speaking out and the referendum is having to look at notes to see what you are going to talk about.

The spoils system was a system or place where they spoiled things or waste was kept and the plans of appointment which have largely replaced the system is the Board of Health.

Two French explorers of the Mississippi was Romeo and Juliet.

[In answer to the question about a book students had read outside of class, one student wrote:] The most interesting book I read was the Bible. It was about the life of our Lord. It was written by Cardinal Spellman.

New York City has a right to secure a large water supply by the expost facto law.

The House of Seven Gables was a house with a broad door through which the Gables entered and had rooms under the roof where the little Gables slept.

[Asked to locate five mountain ranges, a student from New York City wrote:] The Appalachians in Manhattan, the Rockies in Brooklyn, the Himalayas in Richmond, the Alps in the Bronx and the Andes in Queens.

¹⁴ J. C. Dewey, "A Case Study of Reading Comprehension Difficulties in American History," *University of Iowa Studies in Education*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1935. Both of the foregoing quoted in *Educational Psychology*, Arthur I. Gates, et al. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1942), p. 431.

¹⁵ Benjamin Fine, "Boners' of Pupils Culled by Regents," *New York Times*, March 19, 1950.

At the time when Kilpatrick was launching his attack on the subject-matter curriculum, psychologists had already gathered a great deal of evidence to indicate that human beings, for good or ill, had not been created alike; that there existed enormous differences and inequalities among individuals; that they were not alike in height, or beauty, or weight, or emotional stability, or temperament, or memory, or visual imagery, or verbal ability, or manual ability, or *intelligence*, or in any trait that can be measured or estimated.

Professor E. L. Thorndike has pointed out these innate differences with the following example:

"If a hundred problems graded in difficulty in ten steps over a fairly wide range are assigned to, say, a thousand children in Grade 6, there will be some pupils who can (except for occasional slips) solve the entire hundred, and some who cannot solve more than fifty—not if they struggle for hundreds of hours. Problems of a certain degree of complexity and abstractedness they simply cannot solve, just as they cannot jump over a fence five feet high or lift a weight of 500 pounds."¹⁶

Dr. Daniel Starch says:

"This variation in ability is so great that the children of any given age are spread over nine years of maturity. For example, children ten years old range in ability all the way from 14-year-olds to 6-year-olds. . . . *This enormous range of ability and the resulting overlapping of successive grades, is probably the most important fact discovered with reference to education in the last decade.*"¹⁷

For practical purposes, Professor A. I. Gates pointed out that this "sets a limit to the kind, difficulty or complexity of mental functions that can be acquired, and it sets a limit to the rate and permanence with which acquisition, within these limits, may go on. Algebra and geometry as now taught, for example, are beyond the mental capacities for many, and among those who find these functions within the limits of their capacity, individual differences in the rate, comprehension and permanence of learning will be found, due to differences in endowment."¹⁸

Because of this wide range of learning ability there are children who can master the elementary school curriculum with ease in four years and other children who cannot master it in sixteen years; there are students who can master a high school curriculum in one year and others who

¹⁶ E. L. Thorndike, *New Methods in Arithmetic* (New York: Rand McNally & Co., 1921), p. 142.

¹⁷ Daniel Starch, *Educational Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), p. 39.

¹⁸ A. I. Gates, *Psychology for Students of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), pp. 512-513.

cannot do it in twenty; there are college students who have better understanding and mastery of the subject matter of a course than the college professor who teaches it. This academic ability has little to do with effort, zeal, or hard work, or with good or bad teaching. From all we know at present, this academic ability seems to depend on parentage, chance, and environment.

And yet the school systems over the country for the most part demanded that the gifted child with an IQ of 150 do essentially the same kind of work at the same rate of speed as the child with an IQ of 80. It refused to take cognizance of these individual differences. The genius and the moron were forced to pursue essentially the same kind of curriculum. And inevitably the bright ones emerged with gold stars and honors, and the dull ones emerged stamped as "stupid," "failure," "lazy," "good for nothing," "secondhand merchandise." The cruelty and the unfairness of it! To ask children to compete in a race with such odds against them is like pitting a one-legged man against an able-bodied, fleet-footed runner in a race and then, when the crippled man inevitably loses, to heap ridicule and public scorn upon him.

I have seen high school students trying to comprehend heavy tomes in ancient history when their reading ability could not match that of a normal fifth-grade child. I have seen students who could not do simple addition, subtraction, and division going through the agony of trying to understand algebra and geometry. I have seen students who could, with great effort, dimly make out the meaning of simple picture books forced to go through the motions of trying to understand plays by Shakespeare. I have seen these same students, bewildered, resentful, going in a daze to physics classes, to chemistry classes, to foreign language classes.

There comes to mind the harried French teacher who became deeply disturbed because his supervisor tested his class and discovered that his students were unable to write the days of the week in French. A colleague of his suggested that he ask the class to write the days of the week in English. The instructor followed this advice, and he was at first chagrined and then delighted to discover that the results were equally miserable. When his supervisor called him to the office, the teacher, no longer contrite, faced up to him boldly and said: "How can you expect my students to write in French what they can't write in English? You better start with the English teacher."

Nothing that I set down here should be interpreted as an attack on teachers or educators. As a group they believe tenaciously in the healing and beneficent qualities of what they teach. However, by their very zeal, by their very intense and engrossing interest in the subject matter, by

their acceptance of a philosophy of education that made subject matter synonymous with education, they often disregarded the growing, developing child, his needs, his interests, his aptitudes.

In this connection, there comes to mind an English high school teacher who was assigned a class so disobedient, so turbulent, so defiant of school authority that they could not be given freedom to move through the corridors from class to class. They created riots, they rifled teachers' desks, they pummeled students; so much havoc did they create that at one time the police had to be called to restore order.

How did she propose to help this unfortunate group? She meant to continue *Macbeth* as her text. Apologetically she complained of how standards had fallen. In her conversation with me she expressed the hope that eventually she would be able by her good teaching to bring this group up to standard. The text for the grade: Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Only a teacher who has taught children under the traditional system knows how it has warped and corroded the lives of many children. To gain an insight into this aspect of the situation, I, who have been a teacher for over twenty years on every school level—in elementary and high school and in college—feel it necessary to inject my own personal experience for illustration.

I still remember a class I had in 1928, thirteen years after Kilpatrick had formulated his project method. The school was in a low socioeconomic neighborhood; the parents were hard-working laborers, mostly of Italian descent, good people who wanted the best for their children. And our school meant to do right by those children: we held to high academic standards and we prided ourselves that only those could get by who met these exacting standards. The percentage of failures was high: this was a great source of pride; for neither supervisors nor teachers meant to take the easy way out. Even if they or the children should break under the strain, this school meant to carry on in the high tradition of scholarship. If my sixth-grade children had made normal progress, their average age would have been about eleven years; but they were mostly retarded children, and their average age, I should judge, was fourteen, with several children of sixteen and older. To these children—big, unruly, several of whom had been in reformatories, one who had been caught with a loaded revolver by a policeman, another who boasted that he could lick any teacher in the school—to this group I had to teach decimals to five places, fractions of one hundred-thousandth value; to this group, I had to explain the differences in the Articles of Confederation; in nature study, I had to spend considerable time on discussing the habitat of the owl and the habits of the chickadee and more and more of the like.

One has actually to teach such a group to see how far removed all this is from these children's lives, how ridiculous it is even to broach such subjects.¹⁹ I tried to explain these things in the simplest language, but after hours of drill, I would question the class and not discover an inkling of understanding. Many would recite back glibly what I had told them; but they really did not understand, in terms of import, significance, or relationship. I thought at first that it was the fault of my teaching, but I checked on that and discovered that my experience jibed with that of the other teachers. I would at times become angry with the class, but the thought suggested itself: Is it their fault? Can they help being what they are? And then a great pity and sympathy overwhelmed me, and I would look at them hopelessly and helplessly. For I too was caught in the meshes of this system. I had this curriculum to cover, all set out in advance, and I was checked on that, by the principal's personal visits, by his formal end-term examinations, by the examination of the local superin-

¹⁹ A former Marine, Kenneth M. Merrill, who had returned to high school after bloody battles as a machine gunner in the Pacific, in relating his reactions to the traditional curriculum, hoots and howls and laughs at what he had to learn. One of his assignments included this poem:

Near to the nest of his little dame,
Over the mountainside or mead,
Merrily swinging on brier and weed,
Robert of Lincoln is telling his name;
Bob-o'-link, Bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Snug and safe is that nest of ours,
Hidden among the summer flowers
Chee, chee, chee

He goes on to say: "Further assignments included some cute drawings, themes on such topics as 'The English Essayist I Like Best,' and prim little talks on current events.

"The school I went back to ranks among the best in the nation. And yet some of the teachers I once thought were intellectual mountains seemed like frightened persons without imagination or souls. I tried my best to admire them, and ended up pitying them instead. Much of the curriculum was pointless and stuffy. The whole atmosphere, to my surprise, was often like that of a kindergarten," Kenneth M. Merrill as told to Oren Arnold, "An Ex-Marine Looks at High School," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 9, 1944.

A principal came into a teacher's room with one of the school's troublesome problem children, a truant and a delinquent. He said to the teacher: "You are working for a Ph.D. in educational psychology. You have studied psychology, mental hygiene and guidance. See what you can do with him."

The teacher could not hold back his sarcasm. "I'll give him a shot of arithmetic, decimal points to the hundred thousandths. That should make him thrill with delight. After that I'll give him a delicious dose of geography. I'll ask him to recite for me the boundaries of Ecuador. That should take him out of himself. After that, I'll review with him several of the campaigns of the War of 1812. That should leave him blissful, happy and contented."

tendent. But yet the task was such an impossible one, meaning so much hurt and damage to everyone concerned. And if this content could be taught, if this group could be made to learn what was set before them, what of it? Why should they know this stuff, which I would never bother spending a minute with if I did not have to teach it?

And yet they weren't bad boys. They weren't really lazy. Many of the teachers who taught with me held the firm conviction that if these children really tried and worked hard, every one of them could get 100 on the tests they and the principal and the superintendent devised; and that the reason they didn't get 100 was that they were perverse and didn't want to study. How far from the truth! I remember one of the most pugnacious boys, Robert Tosto, a terror to all the teachers. He was powerfully built and a little under sixteen when he entered my class. He was, it is true, a disturbing influence; I was never safe when he was in the room. It so happened that I needed some bookcases painted and I chanced to ask Robert to paint them. His face brightened. Certainly, he would do it; and what was more, I need not worry about paint or brush; he would get them. "You won't steal them?" I asked, for I knew that quite a number of boys in my class were not above that. "No," he assured me. Robert worked on that job all day, and I never met anyone who was more persevering and conscientious about a task.

I asked him to do other things—dust my desk, clean the room; any such request he met with alacrity. If I had asked him to scrub floors, he would have been glad to help. No, Robert wasn't lazy; in fact, after he had been assigned a task, I could be sure that in appreciation he would remain obedient for almost two days. The difficulty was finding work he could do. He detested the work prescribed by the curriculum, which I was hired to teach. And in truth, even if he had tried, he could not do it. He couldn't read, neither could he write. If I asked him to do a long-division example involving decimals, he would look stupid and hateful, for he had learned with much pain how disagreeable teachers could make his ignorance. Since he was big and a bully, he terrorized the other boys into preparing duplicate copies of all classwork. If accused of this, he would become vicious, shouting, cursing, using the vilest language, so that the entire class would become demoralized. Assign him, however, any task he was capable of doing and he became a changed young man, hardly recognizable as the pugnacious, antisocial person which traits the routinized schoolwork called forth.

If Robert represented one child, an atypical example, his educational trials and tribulations would mean little. But in the thirties Robert represented the sorry story of a considerable portion of our school population,

probably 30 per cent.²⁰ Inextricably linked to a rigid, lock-step school system, which emphasized marks, testing, and measuring, this group was continually found wanting; they did not experience success or happiness or pleasure from school, only failure and retardation. It was not uncommon to see a fifteen-year-old boy, big-boned, gangling, sticking out like a sore thumb, trying to squeeze his adolescent body into a desk meant for nine-year-old children, for the educators in their wisdom, by a process of continual failure, had determined that that was where he belonged educationally.

It should not surprise us that these frustrated and "found wanting" Roberts provided a fertile breeding ground for truancy and delinquency. "If you were forced into a mathematics class in which Einstein propounded his latest mathematical theories," I have frequently asked teachers, "if you couldn't understand the language, much less follow intelligently what Einstein was trying to explain, and if you had to come there day after day and sit in the same seat hour after hour, how would you like the experience?"

Our Roberts were for the most part in an analogous position. They sat in their seats hour after hour, not understanding what was happening. And, to boot, for all this they heard themselves called fools, and their test papers came back with failing marks.

I remember one boy who became a delinquent, a real delinquent: the police came into the classroom and dramatically asked if John was in the room, and when he stood up, two men marched him right out of the classroom. The children were impressed, and the teachers used John as a horrible example, and among themselves they all said, "I told you so," and seemed to gloat over the fact that they had guessed so accurately what John's future would be.

I had John in 6B. Like Robert, he was considerably retarded both in grade progress and educationally. His IQ was 72. Of course, he couldn't do his arithmetic or his history or his geography, and I didn't expect too much from him. But if he tried—if he just copied the examples instead of doing them—I would write a big A in red crayon on the paper and I would make sure that he and the class saw it. There were moments when he was difficult. Much of what was going on in the class he did not understand, and naturally he would become bored and get into trouble. I discovered by chance that he had some ability in drawing. I provided him

²⁰ Essentially, what the writer sets down still generally prevails in our public school system. In some areas of America, progress has been made. Unfortunately, there are no statistical studies to indicate the amount or the extent. In elementary schools the progress has been considerable; in high schools, hardly any at all.

with all kinds of drawing material and explained that he had my permission to draw anything he wanted. I set aside one section of the room and arranged a permanent one-man show for him. I never saw any boy expand in the fashion that John did. When I praised him, he looked sheepish and silly, and yet he seemed to feel proud. At the beginning I did all this because I wanted to avoid trouble, since he came to me with a bad reputation. Later I really got to like him; and this did wonders for him, especially when he became conscious of my liking and friendship. He cleaned up the accumulated filth on his person, he came to school with a tie and a white shirt; he came to school more regularly; even in his walk, one could observe less swagger and defiance, less slouching and more dignity. For in this class he for the first time had a place; he belonged. I am not saying that I educated John or really helped him in any essential way. His difficulties remained, only I had relieved the pressure and he was not rebellious. I had not cured the corn, only cut a hole in his shoe, so that the corn had no friction; I had not cured his fundamental trouble; I was only applying poultices. John had no business being in my class to begin with. The type of education I was hired to give could not help him. But that's neither here nor there. What I do want to say is that while with me John gave no trouble.

Eventually I promoted him, and his new teacher was most conscientious in her own way, spending evenings marking stacks of test papers with a red pencil. It wasn't long before she searched me out and with great indignation demanded: "Why did you promote John? He can't read; he can't do arithmetic. He's lazy."

I tried to explain that it would do more harm than good to fail John; that he was already considerably over-age for his class; that I could not stand the thought of his becoming ever more ungainly and gawky in comparison with his classmates.

This teacher looked at me puzzled and stupefied. She had never heard such talk! Did John pass 6B work or didn't he: was he ready for 7A work or wasn't he? To be fair, she did not understand me, nor was I sympathetic to what she was trying to tell me.

In her class, she said, a boy would have to do his work or she would know why: and she would not tolerate laziness, and she implied that she had little respect for indulgent, easygoing teachers.

According to her own light, she was doing what she thought was right, not sparing herself. She had John come to class before regular sessions opened, and she tried to pump arithmetic into his head, division of decimals, compound interest, bank discount, and the like. After school she had John remain for extra work in reading. A 7A boy should know what a 7A boy should!

But John, sad to say, did not thrive on these extra doses of learning. In the months that followed he not only reverted to his old filth, his old swagger and defiance, his old habits of truancy, but he had tried to beat up his righteous and virtuous teacher, so that she in self-defense had to send him off to the principal's office, and there he sat on a bench hour after hour. One time I saw him there and asked what was the matter. And he let out a torrent of vile language, shouting, becoming overwrought with emotion. There was little, unfortunately, I could do for John; I was a cog in a machine much bigger than I was. Even if I had spoken to the principal, I doubt whether he would have understood; for he too was academic minded and what I would have told him would have sounded like heresy.

With a gang of older boys, John sometime later held up a gasoline station. I still feel badly when I think back to the situation. I have never regarded John's imprisonment as virtue triumphant or as evil properly punished, as so many of my colleagues did, but as a tragedy inherent in our traditional system of education.

Again, I want to point out that there were no villains in the piece. It was a monstrous system of education that was at fault, fortified by centuries of tradition that had entered into the very fabric of society; that was part of the folkways and traditions of a people. John couldn't do his arithmetic, and it was wrong to make boys like John wrestle with problems involving decimals, square root, compound interest, and the like. It was wrong to make him wrestle with puzzles that were beyond his intelligence and comprehension; it was like asking a one-legged child to hurdle a six-foot barrier. It was true that John was rebellious, pugnacious, and that he tried to beat up his teacher, but it was also true that the teacher was hounding him and making his life miserable. It wasn't enough that John had to be in one room, in one seat, five hours a day, listening to a lot of meaningless nonsense! Added to his woes was the teacher who called him a fool and an idiot, who tried to impress upon him in every way that he was a failure and undesirable. That would be enough to make a rebel of anyone, and the Johns are rebels and show it by their every action and deed. They are turbulent and unruly; they break school windows; they terrorize children; they rifle storerooms; they at times terrorize teachers; they break into school buildings and leave destruction behind them; they set fire to schools; they create havoc wherever and whenever they can.

A great deal is heard from teachers and in the public press about our aggressive Johns, but little is heard about our quiet Johns—those who meet failure by running away from home or by committing suicide, or by escaping mentally and spiritually from a harsh world; for to our quiet,

passive Johns the world of reality has never been pleasant. In our traditional schools, where the emphasis is on listening, these quiet, passive children fit the pattern perfectly; in fact, they are a favorite among many teachers. They are good children, say the teachers, but they "are so, so slow in learning and they are so dreamy." True enough, they disturb nobody, as they build up a fantastic dream world that more and more unfits them for the real world. These inert children absorb the full measure of punishment onto themselves, and it is they who end up in mental institutions.

It is the turbulent, aggressive children who give schoolpeople and society trouble. It is they who become the delinquents of our society. And it should not surprise us that as a group they are lower than average in intelligence, clustering around an IQ of 80 to 90, with a great many testing considerably lower; also they show considerable academic retardation; in many cases they were habitual truants and they detested school.

Professor Harvey W. Zorbaugh, of the School of Education of New York University, relates a conversation he held with a social worker who was making an investigation of unemployables:

... They are unemployable largely because of their attitude toward society. In the majority of cases these attitudes can be traced to their first contacts with an institution representative of society, the public school. Their answer to questions dealing with their schooling reveal that most of them disliked school, had difficulty in school, were in trouble with the school authorities, and left school—as soon as they could get out—with a resentment toward the school and towards authority in general.²¹

A study of retardation, truancy, and personality maladjustment was made by the Board of Education of New York City. A portion of this report follows:

The Superintendent of Schools reports that 217,822 children are retarded in our schools. Of this number, 7,274 are retarded six or more terms. Of this number 629 children are retarded nine terms or more. . . . Within the last five years the Federal Commissioner of Education has reported that ten per cent of school budgets is spent reteaching children what they have been taught and failed to learn. As great as this financial burden is, a greater one is found when the relation between school retardation and the development of anti-social habits and attitudes is studied. This aspect of the problem of school administration has been strikingly presented by the New York Crime Commission in its study of the causes of crime. A cross section of the men in prison who had been committed for a term of two months or more was studied. The

²¹ Harvey W. Zorbaugh, "Mental Hygiene's Challenge to Education," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, February, 1932.

deduction made from the facts ascertained is as follows: Seventy-six per cent of the men committed were under twenty-five years of age. Over fifty per cent were under twenty-one years of age. . . . Most of them had started as truants and behavior problems, and had been committed to truant schools. A study of 201 boys about to be committed to the truant schools shows among other things retardation in school work followed by discouragement, etc. From the ascertained facts in this study, the Crime Commission states that adult criminals probably are recruited largely from persistent truants. From the above it is obvious that in terms of truancy, bad behavior, distorted personality and juvenile delinquency, the by-products of school retardation are practically incalculable.²²

Professor Rivlin, in summarizing several studies made in this connection, says:

Dull children contribute more than their share of behavior disorders. In Owens' group, only nine-tenths of one per cent of the group had an I.Q. above 110, while 83.6 per cent were below 90. Clark's study of truancy showed 2 per cent of his group to be above average in mentality and 82.3 per cent to be below average. Anderson, studying sixty-five juvenile-court delinquents, discovered that only 1.5 per cent of her cases had intelligence quotients above 115 and 72 per cent below 85.²³

At one time approximately 30 per cent of the school population, now somewhat less, could not master the traditional curriculum, no matter how hard they tried, no matter how hard they worked; and for this innate inability they were made to suffer the agonies of rejection, public scorn, familial disgrace; they were made pariahs and failures from early childhood, for reasons beyond their control.

In altogether too many instances even the able and the brilliant children remember their school days with sadness and pain. Even those students who were interested in so-called scholarly pursuits found in the traditional school no solace, no refuge, no haven; for the school insisted on a regimented, formal kind of learning, a learning that was parceled out in set-in-advance pieces, with its emphasis on memory, recitation, regurgitation, and testing. There was no appeal to the ardor that comes from curiosity, from wanting to know, from self-initiated tasks, from the strong drives that come from deep and passionate interests. There was insistence on uniformity, on obedience, on listening, on acceptance, on

²² "Retardation, Truancy and Problems of Personality and Conduct," Board of Education, the City of New York, October, 1931.

²³ Harry N. Rivlin, *Education for Adjustment* (D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1936).

lock-step conformity. As the individual fitted into the patterns and molds set by the school, he got along; and the better he fitted into these pre-set molds the better he got along. If a student's interest led him into other channels—even if they were intellectually differing channels—they ran afoul of the prescribed rules and regulations and into dire difficulties. As Professor H. E. Hollingworth has said: "The usual school in the past has made little provision for the bright and has been as poorly suited to their talents as to those of the dull . . ." ²⁴

Sir Francis Galton, one of the great intellects of his day, speaking of his education, wrote: ". . . school was hateful to me in many ways, and lovable in none, so I was heartily glad to be taken away from (it) . . ."

Winston Churchill, who was accounted a miserable failure at school and yet did not do badly in life, in speaking of his stay at St. James's School, where he was sent when seven years old, writes: "How I hated this school, and what a life of anxiety I lived there for more than two years. I made very little progress at my lessons and none at all at games."

Whatever one may think of George Bernard Shaw's literary talents, no one can deny that he possessed one of the great, unique minds of his generation. Yet even this great George Bernard Shaw found school a frustrating and painful experience; and his record there was at best mediocre. He talks of school as being worse than a prison and of his teachers as merciless wardens. "In a prison," he said, "you are not forced to read books written by the wardens and the governor . . . , and beaten or otherwise tormented if you cannot remember their utterly unmemorable contents. In the prison you are not forced to sit listening to turnkeys discoursing without charm or interest on subjects that they don't understand or care about. In a prison they may torture your body; but they do not torture your brains; and they protect you against violence and outrage from your fellow prisoners. In a school you have none of these advantages." ²⁵

The teacher of Thomas Edison thought the boy was unteachable, and in despair his mother withdrew him from school in the third or fourth grade and undertook to teach him herself. And yet Edison, this "unteachable" boy, at the age of twelve was reading Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Hume's *History of England*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and the Dictionary of Science.

Lord Byron's chief scholastic activity, by his own confession, was

²⁴ H. L. Hollingworth, *Educational Psychology* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1933), p. 478.

²⁵ Hesketh Pearson, *G.B.S., A Full Length Portrait* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1946), p. 13.

"cricketing, rebelling and mischief." When he by some accident reached the head of the class, his teacher sarcastically remarked: "Now let me see how quickly you'll be at the foot again."

Of Oliver Goldsmith, the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, his schoolmistress said: "Never so dull a boy: he seemed impenetrably stupid." And yet this "impenetrably stupid" boy at the age of eight was reading Ovid and Horace. It is said that William M. Thackeray never succeeded in mastering a page of algebra; his teacher called him "an idle, profligate, shuffling boy." Liebig's language teacher gave him up as a lost soul; his teacher could not understand that Liebig had no interest at all in Latin and Greek; in fact, he hated languages, but he did have a passionate interest in chemistry. He left school at fifteen and worked as an apothecary. He entered the university at seventeen and won his Ph.D. degree at twenty. Because of his engrossing interest in nature, Alexander von Humboldt was regarded by his other subject teachers as mentally dull. In this connection, Dr. Anne Anastasi writes: "Darwin was considered by his teachers to be below average in intelligence. Newton was at the bottom of his class. Heine was an academic failure, revolting against the traditional formalism of the schools at the time. Pasteur . . . and other equally famous men were unsuccessful in their school work."²⁶

Perhaps the strangest story is that of Albert Einstein, who has undoubtedly one of the ablest minds of his generation. For him to master the curriculum of any school should, it would appear, have been as easy as a normal person's breathing. He talks of his dislike of cramming for examinations. "This coercion," he says, "had such a deterring effect [upon me] that, after I had passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any problem distasteful to me for an entire year. In justice, I must add, moreover, that in Switzerland we had to suffer far less under such coercion, which smothers every truly scientific impulse, than is the case in many another locality. There were altogether only two examinations; aside from these, one could just about do as one pleased. This was especially the case if one had a friend, as had I, who attended the lectures regularly and who worked over their content conscientiously. This gave me freedom in the choice of pursuits until a few months before the examination, a freedom which I enjoyed to a great extent and have gladly taken into the bargain the bad conscience connected with it as by far the lesser evil."²⁷ Especially indifferent was he to such subjects

²⁶ Anne Anastasi, *Differential Psychology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 370.

²⁷ Albert Einstein, "Notes for an Autobiography," *Saturday Review of Literature*, November 26, 1949.

as Latin, Greek, and ancient history. He goes on to say: "It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail."²⁸

Claude M. Fuess and Emory S. Basford have compiled an anthology²⁹ of how one hundred famous men regarded their school days, and it seems that many of them remember it with loathing and horror. Speaking of his headmaster, Charles Lamb, who attended Christ's Hospital, a London charity school, says: "He had two wigs. The one serene, smiling, freshly powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discolored caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution. Nothing was more common than to see him make a headlong entry into the schoolroom and with turbulent eye, singling out a lad, roar out, 'Od's my life, Sirra, I have a great mind to whip you,'—then, with as sudden a retracting impulse, fling back into his lair, and after a cooling lapse of some minutes . . . drive headlong out again . . . with the expletory yell—'and I WILL too!'"

Max Beerbohm, the novelist, records that he returned to school after a holiday with the greatest foreboding and dread. Edward Gibbon, who wrote the classic *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, characterizes his stay at Oxford as "the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life." Speaking of his school days, Henry Adams says: "Four years at Harvard College . . . resulted in an autobiographical blank, a mind on which only a watermark had been stamped."

It seems that teachers were made just as unhappy by the regimentation, the continual warfare—students pitted against teachers and teachers against students—as those over whom they exercised authority. "Stephen Leacock, who was for eight years a teacher of Latin before he became an economics professor, recalled the unexpected meetings with former students. ('Do you remember me,' they always seemed to say, 'You licked me at Upper Canada College'). More exasperating were pupils whose parents did their lessons for them: 'I used to say to them: "Paul, tell your father that he must use the ablative after *pro*."' "

But there was always a bright spot, wrote Leacock. "It is the last day of school . . . If every day in the life of a school could be the last, there would be little fault to find with it."³⁰

²⁸ Albert Einstein, "Notes for an Autobiography," *Saturday Review of Literature*, November 26, 1949.

²⁹ *Unseen Harvest: A Treasury of Teaching* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), as reviewed in *Time*, "Tales Out of School," November 10, 1947.

³⁰ "Tales Out of School," *Time*, November 10, 1947.

PART IV

*He Builds the Foundations for a
New Concept of Education*

CHAPTER XV

Preparing the Ground for His Project Method

KILPATRICK broke completely with what he later called the Alexandrian school of education. With Huxley, he maintained that "the great end of life is not knowledge but action." With Goethe, he held that in "the beginning was the act," the deed. With Montaigne, he concurred "that the object of education is to make not a scholar but a man." Education, he maintained, was the development of character and personality, not the acquisition of bookish information. "To calculate exactly what is to be taught now with the idea that it will stay fresh in the child's mind till he is grown up is like measuring meticulously a gallon of water to carry a mile in a leaky bucket."

This was a rapidly changing world, he insisted; no one could divine, forecast, or predict what would be a child's grown-up needs, and no one could prepare such a child with adequate knowledge or responses to serve his needs. To base a curriculum on a child's adult needs was to build on quicksand. Hence, he insisted that the main purpose of education was not to teach a child what to think or what to know, but to teach him how to think, how he could become an independent, self-directing, self-reliant person who could intelligently manage to meet his problems in a dynamic, changing world. The best way to prepare a child for this changing world was for him to practice meeting his present problems realistically and intelligently; and this could best be done by stressing *tested thought*; and "tested thought" can best be taught by having a child participate in *deed* and *action* or, as he came to call it, purposeful activity. He conceived the child, not as an inert vessel into which good things were poured to save him from his own wicked self, but as an individual, as a personality, sacred as such, with wants, hopes, wishes, purposes, desires. Education should center around a self-directing, purposing human being, whether infant, child, or adult.

The best preparation for the six-year-old, he was fond of saying, was happy, adequate, successful living for the five-year-old; the best preparation for the seven-year-old was happy, adequate, successful living for the six-year-old; the best preparation for the eight-year-old was happy, adequate, successful living for the seven-year-old; the best preparation for the twenty-year-old was happy, adequate, successful living for the twenty-year-old. Bookish, factual information should at all times be subservient to living, ongoing life. With Ruskin, he held, "There is no wealth but life." Childhood should be a time of real living, not a preparation for the future.

In defending the project method,¹ which he proposed at a meeting of educators in Chicago on April 28, 1917, he declared: "Our traditional school was organized to supplement the education of the practical life. It thus became predominantly bookish and mental. The body was even despised as material and antispiritual. Aristotle's God spent his time thinking on thought, not on matter; and this was deemed the ideal life of man. Christianity, pagans, aristocrats and the practical world of affairs agreed on restricting physical manipulation in the schools to a minimum. We are heirs to this tradition."

And, he continued—and this served as an underpinning for his maturing philosophy—"The actual life consists very much more of purposes sought in terms of physical and social embodiment than in terms of intellectual problem solving."

Books should be used as tools, not ends in themselves; they should be used as a carpenter uses a saw and a hammer, as an artist uses an easel and paints, as a dramatist the life around him. But books as the beginning and the end of education are a sterile and meaningless kind of education that shrivels up life, and denies all that is good and creative in an ongoing, pulsating, creative life. ". . . This still influential Alexandrian type of teaching reduces man to mind, and mind largely to memory, in the vain unwarranted hope that ideas about a thing will at the right time bring about appropriate behavior. It is evident, however, that character is built only from conduct, and good character only from actual thoughtful and moral behavior. But the Alexandrian school has in its scheme no place for behavior, no regard for building moral character through actual conduct. All that this older outlook does, at the best, is to teach *about* conduct, at the worst it teaches mere words, often meaningless words, frequently with resulting aversion to all they mean."²

¹ The "project method," which he proposed not only as a method of education but as a philosophy of life, will be discussed later in this book.

² W. H. Kilpatrick, *Moral Education and Better Human Relations*, Anti-Defamation League Pamphlet.

To Kilpatrick, education meant better adjustment, richer, happier, increasingly creative living. For this kind of education it was necessary that the child immerse himself in the actual process of living. "We have in mind," he said, "... growth in richness of life and growth in control over experiences. . . . From this point of view education is good when life is continuously made richer and richer and richer. . . . Education should be a continuous process of learning how to rise to meet this newly opening world."³

What was always in his mind was the adjustment of the whole child, to his home, his classmates, his teachers, the community; to all aspects of living that may help him become a cooperating social-minded boy; and later, a social-minded husband and parent; and always, from earliest youth, a participating social-minded member of a democratic community. And these social-minded people should, as a never-ending process, work together to make an ever-finer and ever-better community, nation and world. "If we can each day get him [the child] to do better than the day before, we can gradually build up a finer quality of living. The details of doing it are as infinite as there are children and situations that go on. What I should like to leave in reference to tomorrow is that your curriculum is the living. It is the living of children. It is the content of what they live."⁴

The end object of education is character and personality; learning has importance as it affects character and personality. If this learning does not enter into the person to change or to remake him it has no significance. It is only that which affects the doing, living, individual—in his conduct, in his feelings, in his attitudes and ideals, and in his living—that has educational significance. His emphasis was on thinking and action. We become what we practice; we learn what we voluntarily will and do. If we wish to do good deeds and never do them, then we learn only to *wish* to do good things. If we go to church and listen to moral sermons and we do not reinforce that by practicing morality, we are only *learning to listen* and *we are not made one whit better or more moral*.

"Morals, for example, can only be taught on the basis of the highest attainable living, at each successive stage. Morals cannot be taught on an assignment basis. A child weak on a particular distinction between *meum* and *teum* may be assigned a half hour's practice drill after school but it won't work. Honesty comes not so. It must be lived in a situation which of itself calls out the trait, gives it practice, and then by some

³ W. H. Kilpatrick, *What Is Education, "School and Home,"* Ethical Cultural Society, Vol. 10.

⁴ Mimeographed report of conference of a group of teachers of the Webster Groves (Mo.) Public Schools at Northwestern University, 1940.

sufficient satisfaction fixes the responsibility in character traits. Ideals, attitudes, appreciations, correlative habits can be acquired only in life situations where they will find their natural habitat."⁵

If he was sure of anything, it was that character did not result from moral instruction, from pious words, from verbalization, hitherto the chief prop of traditional school instruction. "Everyone has known for hundreds of years that children have committed the catechism to memory, but it has not made them moral. It is true that the catechism has morality in it, but memorizing it does not make anyone moral; you can say every word in it, but it will have no effect whatever on character." The only real kind of character comes from making decisions, from selecting choices in the context of living. If you want a child to be considerate, he has to practice consideration of others in his heart and in actual situations; if you want a child to be responsible, he has to practice responsibility, in actual situation; if you want him to be democratic, he has to live democracy, in act and in feeling; if you want him to be unselfish, he has to practice unselfishness in the daily context of living.

Contending that hortatory instruction was ineffectual, Kilpatrick told of a child who when asked to write one of the Commandments set this down: "I am the Lord thy God in vain."

Here is what another child set down when asked to write the pledge of allegiance, which he and all the other children in the school so faithfully recited: "I pejur legens; I plaig alegins; I pleage a legion; to the Republicans; one country inavisable; with liberty and jesters . . ."⁶

Since character involves self-initiated decisions, it should be based on self-direction and insight into the right and wrong of a situation. "So we wish always that all who deal with children will work for obedience to the 'why', not obedience to them as a teacher, not obedience to them as a parent, not obedience to the law, but obedience to the 'why,' to the intelligently understanding 'why'."

Again: "Our problem seems to be to make a shift from external authority to internal authority . . . Of course, the danger is that the shift will be *from* external authority and not *to* a basis of internal authority."

Kilpatrick had contempt for rewards, prizes, honors, medals, badges, commendations, marks, whether awarded in or out of school. In this connection, it is fundamental to understand his differentiation between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* interests. If the child played the piano because he liked to play the piano, if a child studied history because he liked to

⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The American Elementary School," *Teachers College Record*, March, 1929.

⁶ W. H. Burton, *Guidance of Learning Activities* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1944), p. 49.

study history, then piano playing and history were *intrinsic* interests. If a child played the piano because his mother rewarded him at the end of his practice period with a piece of chocolate and he played the piano only to get this piece of chocolate; if a child studied because the teacher rewarded him with a high mark, not because he enjoyed the study of history, then, he said, these were *extrinsic* interests, interest that did not come from the tasks themselves. Extrinsic interests, he declared, held out dim prospects of producing desirable attitudes and ideals. "To build in a child the habit of doing an otherwise good deed from a habitual wrong motive is to build an immoral character."⁷

The competition that goes on in school, he insisted, was vicious. If honors and rewards were based on marks, it was inevitable that some would fall by the wayside, broken and injured in the struggle. This was not education, but miseducation, and injury to life and to personality. If you should say that this competition held in the outside world, that was no sufficient answer for wrongdoing. The school should not encourage and imitate evil practices, even if they existed. In the school there should be cooperation and mutual helpfulness, not judging and grading. Each child should be seeking to better his own quality of living, not in terms of comparison with others, but in terms of his own progress and growth. The strongest motivating force governing the conduct of children was *intrinsic* interests and the joys and triumphs that came from doing self-initiated tasks with enthusiasm.

Although he admitted there might be limited uses of coercion—to protect a child in emergencies—he entertained the gravest doubt as to its usefulness as a steady diet. "How is it possible by punishing a child into practicing a thing ever to make that practice satisfying? . . . If the coercion is keenly so felt and continues so to be felt, there is practically no hope. The trait is not built."⁸

But always he wanted character and action to result from learning the "why" of a situation, from seeing the moral implication involved, and from deliberate choice to do what was good and desirable. He did not want these choices to come authoritatively—because it was accounted good by teachers, parents, religious authority, or the state. "Honesty, truth-telling, courtesy, a golden rule consideration for others, for example, would seem sufficiently authenticated to be taught with assurance. So much we may grant, but there appears from it little or no justification for indoctrination. If experience has been enough to settle these matters for

⁷ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Scaffolding of Character Building," *Woman's Press* (of N. Y.), 43:584-6, August, 1924.

⁸ W. H. Kilpatrick, "How Character Comes," *World Tomorrow*, 5:259-262, September, 1922.

the race, the like experience will be available to help teach our child. The beginning of honesty may well be laid in authority, but the 'why' of it all is so obvious that for teaching considerations we should wish it early in the process."⁹

Agreeing with Dewey that life was a social process; that the very personality of the human being was socially built; that there existed no conflict between social institutions and individual needs; that institutions were made to serve man and that they were necessary for man, Kilpatrick sought to isolate a unit of behavior that would be educative in nature, a unit of behavior that offered the maximum possibilities of growth for the whole person, his ethical, moral, intellectual, and social self; a unit of behavior that would fit the needs of an individual living in a changing, dynamic, democratic society; a unit of behavior that would in itself be a prototype of a life good to live and would lead a person to grow into an ever-better life; a unit of behavior that would permit him to interact with his environment and with society, so that he might link his self with a promise of intertwined personal and social growth.

In 1915 he arrived at such a unit of behavior; and this he published in 1918 in the *Teachers College Record* under the title "The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in the Educative Process."¹⁰

"What I was seeking," said Kilpatrick, "was a kind of education that took the person where he was, at whatever stage of development he chanced to be, and helped him to grow as an individual, as a whole person; to grow creatively along his own lines, not in any selfish or egotistical sense, but in a socially useful way, so that our whole social process could go on better. The old way of learning concentrated on books and did not involve creation; in fact, it shut creation out; it shut out emotions, feelings, hoping, ideals, attitudes; it shut out behavior, caring nothing as to whether what this individual learned got into life and changed and

⁹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Thinking in Childhood and Youth," *Religious Education*, February, 1928.

¹⁰ In the original manuscript, he set down the word "project" with quotes. The printer omitted these quotes. He was not, he frankly says, the first to use the word in connection with educational implications. An associate, Professor Woodhull, had published an article suggesting that high school boys should be assigned mechanical projects, such as wiring a house for electric bells. Kilpatrick liked this idea very much, as he thought that practical tasks assigned in school would tend to make for a more meaningful education. Also, it seems that Professor Snedden, another colleague and a severe critic of Kilpatrick, had also used the word "project" in an educational sense. But no one used the word "project" in philosophy or methodology or with the over-all significance that Kilpatrick did; and it can be said that in the way he conceived and proposed the "project," with its emphasis on the purposeful act, it was altogether original and unique with him.

made better this life. What you had was the pretense of developing the intellect. I began to criticize behavior, asking whether this kind of behavior was apt to lead to better things to do."

He called this *activity leading to further activity*. He thought that activity of the right kind could develop a person so that he could grow steadily into more of a person, so that he could increasingly grow in skills and abilities; ever becoming more able to carry on successfully in his environment, ever better able to solve his own problems and needs.

In illustrating this concept of *activity leading to further activity*, a favorite device of his was to list possible activities, and then ask: which of them offer more fruitful possibilities for further interest and growth? Let us compare doll playing and swinging. What educative possibilities reside in doll playing? Children who play with dolls may interchange ideas with other children; they may sew dresses for their dolls, they may act out tea parties, they may exchange visits with other children, they may become acquainted with other homes and other families. The whole process of family life opens up before them. "When, however, you swing," said Kilpatrick, "you swing and that's all. You can't do anything else in connection with it." Or compare dice playing and hiking. While hiking, you may talk and meet with people; you may observe birds and trees; you may cook a meal; you may learn how to overcome the elements. As for dice playing, "it's just that one thing alone." Gambling leads to nothing more than more gambling. And that shuts off all other parts of life. Consider algebra and Latin and literature. For some algebra and Latin may lead on to wider vistas of interest, but by and large, for the average person, literature offers many more possibilities of leading on to a larger life.¹¹

"Any activity—beyond the barest physical want—which does not thus 'lead on' becomes in time stale and flat. Such 'leading on' means that the individual has been modified so that he sees what before he did not see or does what before he could not do. But this is exactly to say that the activity has had an educative effect. Not to elaborate the argument,

¹¹ The writer has seen a class of six hundred and more graduate students in education, comprising teachers, principals, superintendents, vote their opinion in overwhelming numbers that Greek, Latin, and mathematics offered the least likely possibilities for educational growth; and with almost the same unanimity they placed dancing, dramatics, and doll playing high on the list in this regard.

G. B. Shaw has one of his characters speak as follows: "Let me advise you to study Greek, Mr. Undershaft. Greek scholars are privileged men. Few of them know Greek; and none of them know anything else; but their position is unchallengeable. Other languages are the qualifications of waiters and commercial travellers: Greek is to a man of position what the hallmark is to silver."

we may assert that the richness of life depends exactly on its tendency to lead one on to other like fruitful activity."¹²

A good test as to whether education is "taking" is to observe what children do after they are dismissed from school. If they continue the same school activities—after school and holidays—voluntarily and zestfully, then you have effective learning, for then you can presume that such activities have entered into the children's lives in a crucial way.

Not only is the individual a purposing creature, Kilpatrick insists, but he is a creative creature; and this creativeness is inherent in practically his every act. It is true that not all human beings are capable of creating on the same plane; some are capable of creating on a grand and magnificent scale, providing new insights and new patterns of behavior, so novel, so overpowering that they become embedded into society's very culture and civilization: others create on a minor scale, perhaps for themselves alone or for a limited circle. But every human being is capable of creativeness and is creative. When an individual chooses color combinations for the clothing he wears, he is creating: this combination of clothes is unique to the individual. When a housewife tries out a new dish, or serves in a new way, or rearranges her household furniture, she is creating; for these responses are unique and new to her. Every time a child is confronted with a new situation, in which his old ways of responding are not adequate, he is forced to rely on his creativeness, for this situation demands new and unique responses. The social-minded person who organizes a group to open the doors of the school building for community enterprise is engaged in a creative enterprise, for he is involved in new and unique experiences. In practically all our activities, excepting those of a low vegetative order, we are essentially creative. Even in crossing a street with heavy traffic we cannot depend on rote habit for the solution, for in the crossing we have to adjust to a unique and different situation. The world is never the same; and neither is the individual ever quite the same. If Galileo had repeated his experiment with the falling weight, he would have been confronted by a changed situation; some of his spectators would have seen or have heard about his previous demonstration and, whether impressed or otherwise, they could no longer have viewed the new demonstration in the same way as they had the first.

Kilpatrick tried to evolve a methodology that would incorporate his ideas of what comprises a good education. The more he pondered the

¹² W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in the Educative Process," (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Teachers College Bulletin, Tenth Series, No. 1918), p. 12.

more he came to believe that whatever was taught should emphasize "the factor of action, preferably wholehearted vigorous activity . . ." In this connection, he thought that "some typical unit of concrete procedure might supply the need—some unit of conduct that should be, as it were, a sample of life, a fair sample of the worthy life and consequently of education. As these questions rose more definitely to mind, there came increasingly a belief—corroborated on many sides—that the unifying idea I sought was to be found in the conception of wholehearted purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment, or more briefly, in the unit element of such activity, the hearty, purposeful act."¹³

In arriving at this conclusion, he freely acknowledges his indebtedness to Dewey, especially Dewey's conception of the school as a miniature society; also Dewey's insistence that the greater the interest the greater the effort. Kilpatrick's own experience as a teacher convinced him that when students were "in on things" on the ground floor, they "learned better, they behaved better and they were happier." He was also influenced by a chance experience. While visiting a play school for young children, he saw a small boy of about five or six sawing perseveringly on a hard piece of wood, trying to cut out a window for a house he was constructing. It was hard work for the child, but he manfully and persistently struggled with the task. The other children were less assiduous. They had contrived an inclined plane, and they were having lots of fun sliding on it. They called out to him: "Come on, John, slide with us." He wouldn't leave his task: he kept sawing away. They pleaded with him, "Come slide with us." But still he wouldn't go. Finally, the children forgot about him and left him undisturbed. The boy turned to Dr. Kilpatrick and said: "They play while I work."

Said Kilpatrick: "I now saw what I was after. Here was a boy with a purpose, sticking to it, putting his best efforts into it. That's what I wanted."

In his now-famed article on "The Project Method," he wrote: "Suppose a girl has made a dress. If she did in hearty fashion purpose to make a dress, if she planned it, if she made it herself, then I should say the instance is that of a typical project. We have in it a wholehearted purposeful act carried on amid social surroundings. That the dressmaking was purposeful is clear; and the purpose once formed dominated each succeeding step in the process and gave unity to the whole. That the girl was wholehearted in the work was assured in the illustration. That the activity proceeded in a social environment is clear; other girls at least are to see the dress.

"As another instance, suppose a boy undertakes to get out a newspaper.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

If he is in earnest about it, we again have an effective purpose as the essence of a project. So we may instance a pupil writing a letter (if the hearty purpose is present), a child listening absorbedly to a story, Newton explaining the motion of the moon on the principles of terrestrial dynamics, Demosthenes trying to arouse the Greeks against Philip, Da Vinci painting the *Last Supper*, my writing this article, a boy solving with felt purpose an 'original' in geometry. All the foregoing have been acts of individual purposing, but there are just as truly group projects: a class presents a play, a group of boys organize a baseball nine, three pupils prepare to read a story to their comrades. It is clear then that projects may present every variety that purposes present in life. It is also clear that a mere description of outwardly observable facts might not disclose the essential factor, namely the presence of a dominating purpose."¹⁴

As the child interacts with his environment, as he tries to adjust to its demands, he develops purposes, objectives, goals, aims, needs, wants; and it is these purposes, objectives, goals, aims, needs and wants that should serve as the central focus of the school; this should be its curriculum, not the mastery of books, nor the passing of examinations, nor the acquiring of information. The main concern of the school should center around the growing life of the child and the quality of that life. Is the child adjusting to his environment, ever more ably, ever more adequately, ever more successfully? Basic to such a belief is the assumption that if a child at seven is meeting successfully, zestfully, and happily the demands of his environment, this offers the optimum likelihood that the same child at eight will in a similar manner successfully grapple with his environment. If this child continues this kind of living year after year, until he is thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, then it is also fair to assume that in the course of such active adjusting and grappling with his environment he will have acquired all the tools, techniques, skills, and information necessary for him to live the good life at twenty, at thirty, at forty, and thereafter. At least this approach to education offers better prospects for such an inference than any other method of education. Longfellow probably had this notion in mind when he said: "Let us act that each tomorrow finds us farther than today."

Kilpatrick wanted a kind of education where a child could conceive, plan, execute, judge, and evaluate a task peculiarly his own. "In the case where no purpose is present, there the weak and foolish teacher has often in times past, conjoled and promised and sugar-coated, and this we all despise. Purpose then—its presence or its absence—exactly dis-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

tinguishes the desirable and manly interest from the mushy type of anything-to-keep-the-dear-things-interested or amused. It is purpose then that we want, worthy purposes, urgently sought. Get these, and the interest will take care of itself. All that is good we'll have."¹⁵

Again, "Our ordinary school in so far as it excludes the elements of purpose on the part of the child exactly excludes the conditions under which moral character is best developed. It is little wonder that the American citizen is too selfish and wrongly individualistic in his conduct. Our schools could hardly have been arranged more effectively to produce in him exactly this result. To expect a child to gain self-control by denying to him the opportunity to exercise responsibility is like expecting to learn to swim out of water."¹⁶ A slave, said Plato, was an animated tool because his purposes were not his own, but his master's. A free man must work on his own purposes.

How strong is the power of purpose, how it overcomes obstacles, how it leads to achievement has been told to us by William James, as follows: "You can be an artist without visual images, a reader without eyes, a mass of erudition with a bad elementary memory. In almost any subject your passion for that subject will save you. If you only care enough for a result you will almost certainly attain it. If you wish to be rich, you will be rich; if you wish to be learned, you will be learned; if you wish to be good, you will be good. Only you must, then, really wish these things, and wish them with exclusiveness, and not wish at the same time a hundred other incompatible things just as strongly." At another point, James says: "Keep your eye on the place aimed at, and your hand will fetch it."

Schools which dedicate themselves to helping children in their own social purposes become radically changed in character and outlook. There is no desire to mark, judge, and grade: teachers are not on one side and children on the other side: there is no failure, outside of the inherent task itself, and no stigma on the person. There is mutual helpfulness, and mutual aims. The teacher becomes a guide to serve the child's own purposes and needs. From this communality of enterprise, there emerge the most fruitful and most potent possibilities for desirable social development. This kind of school must become an institution suffused with significant and meaningful child activities. In such a school, if the child should want to write a book, it should allow him to write a

¹⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Teaching by the Project Method," *Detroit Journal of Education*, October 30, 1919.

¹⁶ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Public Education as a Force for Social Improvement," *School and Society*, Vol. 41, April 20, 1935.

book; if he should want to paint a picture, it should allow him to paint a picture; if he should want to construct a motor boat, it should allow him to construct a motorboat; if he should want to edit a newspaper, it should let him edit it.

If a class should become interested in juvenile gang warfare in their local neighborhood, the students should not confine this interest to a book and a subsequent examination. They should come to grips with the problem, with the situation itself. Yes, they should read authoritative books on juvenile delinquency, but they should do more, much more. They should consult with public officials, social workers, psychologists, criminologists, molested shopkeepers, numbers of the warring gangs. Once they have obtained insight and understanding into the situation, like decent-minded citizens of a democracy, they should try to remedy the situation, as best they can.

A boy became interested in boats. First, he was fascinated by toy boats; then he began to build wooden boats, sailboats, rowboats, almost every kind of boat. As his interest grew he built boats driven by gasoline engines; small at first and for the pleasure of it; and then finally, by the age of fifteen, he had built a big motorboat, able to carry three to five passengers.

Since he was a student at a progressive school he was allowed to make this interest the main activity of his elementary and high school education. In mastering the problems that confronted him in his task he had to learn physics, chemistry, mathematics, the use of tools and apparatus; he had to study the literature of boats; and to navigate the boat, he had to study currents, maps, meteorology. Incidentally, did he master the conventional subject matter that youths of his age ordinarily do who attend conventional schools? Apparently so, for at the age of seventeen he won a scholarship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a result of a competitive examination.

If the child, as Kilpatrick says, grapples realistically with a situation and "if he tries faithfully, thinks it through, looks squarely at things, sees how things turn out and why—if he does these things as best he can and does not get angry to try to evade issues, then he is growing, and will grow into more of a person. This growing will thus come about just as surely as a stone turned loose will fall."¹⁷

Here is the story of another project, this time of an intellectual problem-solving nature. It occurred in a class taught by Miss Josephine Maloney, of the Milwaukee State Teachers College. An eighth-grade boy brought

¹⁷ W. H. Kilpatrick, "My Child as a Person," *Teachers College Record*, March, 1932.

to class a magazine in which it was stated that the Boston Massacre was a concoction of the imagination, that such an incident had never occurred; and that it was wrong and harmful to teach fiction as historical fact. The boy asked his classmates: "How about this?"

The class was vastly disturbed. "If we cannot believe what we read about the Boston Massacre in our history books, what can we believe? How do we know that anything is true?"

They talked about this a great deal, and then they asked: "How does one go about checking up on such things?"

The class assembled all the history books they could find, about eighteen. Says Kilpatrick, continuing the story: "They read all these history books, and all but four gave practically the same account, the one which is commonly given. Four of these accounts were somewhat different; they were a little more guarded in their statements. Then the children said, which is right? Is the magazine right? Are the four books right? Or are these fourteen books right? They didn't know what was the answer. How do historians know what is right and what is wrong? After discussing this matter, they decided to write to every one of these authors. They wrote, but did not receive a single reply. They were now thoroughly disgusted. They wrote again, saying that they were in earnest and wanted to find out about this matter. This time two or three replied, including one of the four who hedged in his statements. And this one said, 'There is very little known about the Boston Massacre. All that is known is found in such and such a book.' They found the reference, and after carefully examining the material, the class concluded that the customary accounts had gone beyond the facts, but that the facts were considerably more than the magazine had claimed."

Some time later this same class tried to establish the authenticity of another printed statement. Mrs. Victor Berger, the wife of the well-known American Socialist, was a candidate for reelection as a member of the Milwaukee school board. The day before the election the newspapers printed a report that Mrs. Berger opposed interschool athletic competition. A boy brought this newspaper to school and the class, on hearing of Mrs. Berger's position, became upset. Since the board was evenly balanced pro and con, Mrs. Berger's reelection would mean the end of athletic competition; and the children didn't like that. They began devising means to prevent this outcome. However, one little girl said: "We found out that we couldn't believe what was in the history books. Can we believe what's in the newspapers?"

The more the class talked about the matter the more they became convinced that what their classmate said had merit. Yes, they agreed, they

ought to find out; they ought to investigate. But how? What should they do? Then someone suggested, "Let's ask Mrs. Berger." The class decided that that was a good idea, and they forthwith chose a committee for this purpose. The committee communicated with Mrs. Berger by telephone; and then the committee made this report to the class: The whole story, Mrs. Berger had told them, was false from beginning to end; it was inserted in the newspaper at the last moment to defeat her. "If you go down to City Hall, and you examine such and such records," she said, "you'll find that my vote is recorded in favor of this athletic program." Whereupon the children appointed another committee to go to City Hall and check the records and report back their findings. The committee came back with the final report: Mrs. Berger was telling the truth: the newspaper had printed a falsehood.

The next day every vote in the district, except one, went to Mrs. Berger. The children had gone from house to house and told what they had found out.

Commenting on this, Kilpatrick said: "This illustrates a number of things. You see here how one experience—that of questioning the Boston Massacre—carried over into life, into actual living. If you can't believe what's in the history book, the children reasoned, maybe what's in the newspaper isn't true, either. But now these children were better able to find out what was the truth. They telephoned, they went to the City Hall to look up records; and when they decided they favored Mrs. Berger's reelection, they enlisted the aid of their parents and they went all-out to get her reelected."

Kilpatrick conceived learning and schooling as part of a community enterprise, enlisting the active aid of every agency and person in it. He wanted the confining classroom walls broken down and the fresh breath of living to pour into the vacuum. He wanted children to propose, make, discuss, plan, purpose, find out. He wanted the school to extend into local factories, business establishments, retail stores, power plants, museums, zoos, libraries, parks, hospitals, governmental and civic agencies. He wanted the school to enlist the help of experts and persons of every kind of specialized knowledge—craftsmen, engineers, doctors, painters, actors, dancers, laborers, parents, anyone who could contribute in making the school a place of rich and fruitful living.

As Kilpatrick said: "I am myself strongly convinced that community service, properly directed, is *par excellence* the living means of building moral and civic responsibility in youth. And I am also strongly convinced that a wisely managed community will prove often, and perhaps generally, the best means of promoting and guiding a wise and educative

community service, a community service suited to educate youth for democratic citizenship."¹⁸

He wanted youth to participate in the normal ongoing life of the community, to serve in day nurseries, parks, settlement houses, community projects, government agencies. What better way was there to ensure that they would grow up to be social-minded and community-minded citizens? What better way was there to teach civic responsibility? What a wealth of idealism, what opportunities for teaching responsibility and character was being lost, because youth did not learn from childhood the habit of unselfish service?

He wanted the schools to acknowledge that to them came future carpenters, bricklayers, bookkeepers, clerks, salesmen, laborers; that to them came children of all kinds, those with the highest intellectual abilities, average children, and intellectually dull children. Emotionally, some were wholesome, some twisted inside with horrors and nightmares. Physically, some were powerful and others weak and ailing. Socially, some were well adjusted, able to get along with everyone; some were shy and timid, and some were beginning to live in a world apart. The school's task for all these children was to take them as they were and to try to help *each one of them* to grow up to be a fine man or a fine woman, and all of them to be social-minded, participating members of a democratic society.

Let us see how the project method of teaching made possible the realization of many of these objectives. The illustrations here presented occurred long after Kilpatrick had formulated the project method and after many schools had adopted his suggested procedures.

In one high school the students, in their regular studies, succeeded in rehabilitating the economy of an impoverished rural community. In determining why farmers did so poorly with their crops, they made a study of the local soil, reading on the subject and consulting university experts. They came to the conclusion that farmers were planting crops altogether unfitted for the local soil. After they had publicized their conclusions and after the farmers had made appropriate changes, there was a general uplift of the prosperity of the entire community.

In a course dealing with the biology related to home, children, and marriage, students organized a nursery for the children of working mothers.

A class in the problems of democracy attended the meetings of the local governing body; and as they watched the officials at work they

¹⁸ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Community Service, a Means of Building Responsibility in Youth," *Alabama School Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 7.

became convinced that the town was not being efficiently managed and that the elected officials were not animated by adequate zeal. They aroused the town to the situation; and at the next election they campaigned for and helped to elect candidates of their own choice.

In yet another high school the students became disgusted with their wretched school building and they planned and they constructed a brand-new building as well as the furniture for it.

"In a rural Georgia county, the young people became aware that they and their families were missing out because they had no machine for processing sweet potatoes for shipment. They investigated the machinery used in a nearby town, built a shop, enlisted the help of the townspeople and set up a small processing plant."¹⁹

A project conducted in a small rural Missouri school by the principal, Ellworth Collings, a former student of Kilpatrick's, improved the health of the whole community. Two pupils were absent from school because they had contracted typhoid fever. The class remembered that last year other children of the family had been absent for the same reason. What was the reason for this? They began to study the possible causes for typhoid. Once they had learned what these causes were, they proceeded to examine the family's well water. Since the well stood on high grounds and its walls were well-cemented, that was eliminated as a cause. Then they asked about the household milk; the family said they didn't drink milk; so that also was eliminated as a cause. The class observed, however, filth, garbage, and refuse around the house.

Said Kilpatrick: "The class decided that here lay the cause of the infection carried by the swarm of flies into the unprotected house. They reported their conclusion to the owner, they made a plan for the complete screening of doors and windows, with an estimate of the cost; they designed a fly trap and set it up. When everything had been done satisfactorily, the class chose several of their members to give talks on the cause of typhoid at a public meeting to which parents were invited."²⁰

Commenting on this project, Kilpatrick said: "Now I don't have to name what it was that this class was studying. In fact, I doubt if I could, and I don't care. Whatever it was, it was something good."²¹

In Paterson, New Jersey, school children played in a park adjoining a hazardous motor road. The children went into the problem of the feasibility of by-passing this road by building an underpass. They had studied the situation thoroughly and they presented a powerful case in support

¹⁹ *Junior League Magazine*, May 3, 1944.

²⁰ "The Project Method in Practice," *New York Evening Post*, August 19, 1922.

²¹ *Ibid.*

of this innovation. The City Planning Commission came out in favor of the proposal and the change was eventually made.

"I haven't a doubt," said Kilpatrick, "that this experience will make every child who participated a different citizen . . . for the rest of his life; and if he gets a chance he will do something else for Paterson. Now that shouldn't happen once in a lifetime with children but should happen every few weeks."²²

Those who remember their own schooling and are acquainted with conventional school procedures know that most of the government, civics, and even social studies courses were "bookish" in nature, factual in content, and primarily concerned with answering examination questions. Kilpatrick was among the first to express his contempt for this kind of teaching. In these courses, students learned from textbooks about the American Constitution, about Congress, about election procedures, about local governments, and the like. They were not expected to do anything about what they learned; they were not expected to participate in civic enterprise in any way; what the school expected of them was to imbibe and retain the facts—until examination time. This abstract, impersonal body of information which they acquired could not, except in the rarest individuals, change the course of their action or doing. The instruction was authoritarian and static. Students were not expected to choose, decide, discuss, interchange opinions. If they did, it was artificial and hypothetical, for they were not confronted with a real, meaningful, current situation, for which they had to assume the responsibility of a solution and, hence, it was not at all queer or strange that this civics instruction generally began and ended with a textbook.

What a far cry from what Kilpatrick proposed, how inherently superior were his procedures, how infinitely richer and more vital, how much more likely that the learnings from this newer methodology would remain with students and actually remake their lives—in school as children and, later, in afterschool days as adults!

²² Mimeographed report of a conference of teachers of the Webster Groves (Mo.) Public Schools at Northwestern University, 1940.

CHAPTER XVI

Concomitant Learnings and the Project Method

THE traditional school was based on an atomistic psychology. It believed that the child responded to one stimulus at a time, and one stimulus alone. When the child worked at his arithmetic examples, he responded, so educators thought, only to the arithmetic examples set before him; when he did his history, it was thought that he responded only to the history subject matter set before him; similarly, it was thought that this held true for geography, nature study, music, reading, or any other stimulus set before him. In this view educators had the support of academic psychologists, particularly of Professor Thorndike, whose theories exercised powerful sway in the profession. Thorndike conceived of most situations in terms of Stimulus and Response. Two and two equal four: "two and two" is the stimulus, "four" is the response. The important and main aim of the educator, so many thought, was to provide the stimulus and to drill for the correct rotelike response. Practically the whole profession of education sought to narrow down and to shrink learning and education to the pattern of stimulus and response.

Although at the outset Kilpatrick was committed to Thorndike's psychology, he never in his writing or thinking considered the child in terms of fractionated pieces or in terms of atomistic, rotelike responses to isolated stimuli. Kilpatrick insisted that no matter what the stimulus, no matter what the situation, the child learned many things other than the overt act and the direct, immediate response. "The whole cat," he said, "catches the mouse."

Here is a boy, he said, who is being scolded by his teacher for not learning his fractions. That boy is thinking and feeling about that scolding. It is true that it may induce him to study harder the next time. Certainly, that is what the teacher wants. But instead the child may feel, as he is being scolded, that the teacher is not fair to him; he may be

building antipathy to his teacher; he may be building an attitude of antagonism to the school. If he accepts this scolding, he may be building in himself a sense of inadequacy, frustration, and failure. He may be resolving at that very moment to gain freedom from this horrible place at the first possible chance. He may be acquiring all these concomitant and associate learnings in connection with this experience, this scolding.

To Kilpatrick, the human being was never a mechanistic machine, but a purposing, wishing, wanting, hoping organism. This concept, in the twenties and even in the early thirties, represented an iconoclastic and isolated point of view, even among academic educational psychologists. Kilpatrick was among the first to perceive the dominating influence of attitudes in the learning process. It was he who saw the importance of these as a key to the motivation of the individual, for these attitudes, he perceived, were closely allied to interests, goals, predispositions, values, habits with emotional components, feelings, convictions, desires; and it is these drives that become propelling powers for action and behavior.

"The children must and do build attitudes toward, or unfavorable attitudes against," he said. "It can't be avoided. It goes on all the time. They are all the time building attitudes in regard to subject, school, teacher, themselves, ways of going about things. That they build attitudes is inevitable; but what kind do they build? That is where our responsibility comes in."¹

Kilpatrick differentiated the learning that goes on in school under two categories: one, direct, intentional, or primary; two, attendant, associate, or concomitant. When a child learns history, geography, reading, or any other school task set before him, the resulting learnings are of the first category, namely, *direct, intentional, or primary*. But, he said, that was not by any means all that the child was learning, despite psychologists and educators to the contrary. The child who had his head bent over his arithmetic lesson was learning at the same time to associate this arithmetic with "liking" or "disliking," "pleasantness" or "unpleasantness," with a determination to continue the further study of arithmetic or to drop it at the first opportunity; he was learning that school was a good place in which to be or that it was a horrible place set up to torture young people; he was learning that teachers were nice people and helpful or he was learning that they were obnoxious taskmasters. Learning does not proceed in isolated compartments; every act of learning reaches out and engulfs the entire organism. When a child is doing his arithmetic, he is reacting, for good or evil, as a *whole person to the whole situation*. He

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, *Foundations of Method* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), pp. 99-100.

does not react to arithmetic or to any school task piecemeal. As Koffka said: "What happens at one point in the organism is never independent of, or without its influence upon, what is taking place at any other point in the organism."² Watson said that "even if he [the subject] only raises a finger, or says the word 'red' . . . the whole body participates in the reaction . . . a stimulus applied anywhere on the body produces not only a local segmental reflex action, but it changes the system of tension and secretions probably in every part of the body."³

These *simultaneous* learnings, these indirect learnings, Kilpatrick called *attendant* or *associate* or *concomitant* learnings.⁴

Once this view is accepted, we can no longer simply think of arithmetic per se, but we must also think of what is happening to the whole child while he is ostensibly engaged in what is apparently a simple school task. We can no longer think simply of any subject per se—history, geography, Latin, English—but we must always also think of human beings reacting to these subjects. We must think of these reactions in terms of a whole self reacting to the whole situation in which the subject matter is placed, namely, school, teachers, classmates, and of course, the subject itself. This concept makes subject matter subordinate to the larger situation. These concomitant learnings—the way the child feels, thinks, his likes and dislikes, his emotional responses, his attitudes—become more important than the actual mastery of subject matter. Paradoxical as it may seem, these inner attitudes become more significant for his future development and growth than the child's outer and measurable responses.

"The more I thought about this concept of concomitant learning the more I saw clearly that these associative and attendant learnings are the ones out of which character and personality are mainly built. The traditional teacher was concerned only with whether the child could repeat the dates, the names, and the factual contents of history. I wanted him to love history, to love what he was doing. I wanted him to develop such desirable concomitant learnings that as an independent, self-directing person, from his strong interest in history, he would continue liking and studying history long after he had terminated his school experiences. Many and many a boy after passing his examination says: 'Thank Gracious, I'm through with that. I don't ever have to look at that text again.' In fact, in some colleges there is a regular ceremony of burning

² Kurt Koffka, *The Growth of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1924), p. 80.

³ J. B. Watson, *Psychology from the Standpoint of the Behaviorist* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1929), pp. 48, 122.

⁴ Kilpatrick conceived this concept of concomitant learnings about 1918.

the calculus books as soon as students finish the subject. That's exactly the thing I didn't want, and that is exactly what the old type of teaching naturally led to."

Only poor and questionable learnings can be built on "hates" and "dislikes." The child who upon the completion of a history course vows that he will never look at another history book has not learned history, even if he has passed the course with high honors. The child who hates geography—although he has made an A in the course—has not really learned geography. The student of French, though he knows every rule of grammar and can translate every line of text from French into English, who at the end of the course hopes that never in his life will he hear another word of French has not really learned French.

The project method becomes a medium, *par excellence*, for acquiring the richest of concomitant learnings, for here the main emphasis is on the child's becoming engrossed in tasks that are meaningful to him. Since these tasks are set by the child himself, they arise out of his interests, purposes, and needs; it is he who has conceived them, planned them, and is now executing them. The teacher in this connection becomes not an obnoxious taskmaster but a friend and a guide, a person who helps him do the things he wants to do and has his heart set on doing. Under the old system, as Kilpatrick said, "the child is out to beat the teacher, to get ahead of the teacher, to outwit him." Under the project method the main task of the teacher is to help the child in his own purposes; they both now have common objectives. They both now can work together. Under this method the teacher really becomes an aid and a friend in helping the child achieve his own purposes.

For this reason, Kilpatrick insisted that the child must actually "purpose" what he sets out to learn; and, what is more, he should not be fooled into thinking that a task is his when it is really the teacher's or one prescribed by a prearranged curriculum. "The essence of life," Kilpatrick maintained, "is spontaneity and its outgrowth."⁵

"If you make your curriculum in advance," he warned, "and so hand it out to your teachers and thus require a set schedule of educational outcomes, the teaching must fail to educate. Properly educative experiences cannot be so ordered in advance as to yield designated outcomes, let alone be ordered months in advance."⁶

The richest ore is struck when the teacher works with the enthusiasm

⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, Address before the Michigan State Teachers' Association, October 29, 1914.

⁶ Twenty-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1926.

and felt needs of children. Here is a child who is assigned by his teacher to write a letter to a friend on how he made a kite. Another boy loves steamboats, and he reads that if he can get three subscriptions to the *Saturday Evening Post* he will get a toy steamboat as his own. He solicits neighbors and friends, and he writes many letters to relatives asking them to subscribe. At last he is successful, and triumphantly he at last dispatches a letter to the magazine enclosing his subscriptions and asking for his premium. Which letter is better motivated? Which offers greater possibility that the learning will enter into life and remake experiences? In which lies greater possibilities for desirable concomitant learnings?

Here is a girl who is assigned by her dressmaking teacher to sew ten seams; here is another child who finally prevails on her mother to allow her to make a dress; and this she does under her mother's guidance. Which experience is more likely to provide richer concomitant learnings?

Here is a boy studying bank discount. Why he is studying it he does not know. What use he may eventually have for it he cannot now fathom. Here is another boy in the process of building a radio; in his school library he finds many books on the subject; and one of his teachers knows enough about radio construction to guide him over difficult spots. Can the first boy's "dead storage" knowledge compare with the real, meaningful learnings of the second boy?

The project method is the ideal medium for ensuring wholesome, desirable concomitant learnings, which are so much more important than the ostensible, overt, direct learnings.

CHAPTER XVII

Urbanization and the Project Method

WHEN we were a farming people, with an unsettled frontier, living in a domestic economy, the child had duties, chores, responsibilities. He contributed his share of work in the maintenance of the household. He chopped wood, he milked cows; he plowed, sowed, and reaped; he helped with repairs; he looked after the cattle. The girl sewed, baked, cooked, made household articles. The home was a miniature factory. Even their entertainment they had to manufacture themselves. In this household every member encountered a multitude of firsthand experiences. The mere satisfaction of routine needs served to build character, perseverance, stick-to-itiveness, courage. Here the facing of environmental problems realistically was a pressing necessity if life was to go on at all.

"The pioneer child," as Kilpatrick said, "was really educated in the pioneer home and community. Life was simple and lay open to view. Merely living the normal life brought enough of opportunities and responsibilities to give a very adequate introduction to the normal adult life. The girl helped the mother, the boy the father. Each grew to adulthood seeing and feeling the insistence of that simple life."¹ What they did not see made at home they could watch being made at the local blacksmith shop or at the mill. Even the morals and ethics of the community were simple, so that the child could perceive relationships and reasons; as also was local government, for here he could observe not only processes but the actual interplay of political forces.

In this environment an education centering around the 3 R's might have been sufficient, for the school was contributing only an additional tool to the existing adequate process of education.

What a far cry indeed from the situation as it exists today! Our modern

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Elementary School: Its Status and Problems," *New Republic*, November 12, 1924.

urban civilization has robbed the child of responsibilities, of chores and duties. The child's milk comes in bottles placed at his doorstep. And this holds true of practically all his other material needs. The household in which he lives gets its food from the local grocery, its bread and cake from the bakery; and from impersonal stores it gets its furniture, its clothing, its shoes, its automobiles, its radios, and nearly everything else it needs. The child rides in an automobile but he has never seen one made; he turns on the radio, which fills his house with noise, but he has not seen the broadcasting station from whence the noise originates; he wears clothes, but he has never seen cloth woven. He lives in a house, but he has never participated in its building, nor has he any idea of how it was put together. Even the heat for his home comes from a radiator. If the house requires repairs, the family calls the plumber, the carpenter, the electrician, the roofer. If the child lives in a rented apartment, the family notifies the superintendent of any defect. His father works away from home and the child is only dimly aware of what his father does. His mother at home manufactures little of anything; she herself is dependent on a plethora of mysterious gadgets that vacuum the floors, keep the household clocks running, toasts the bread. Government and morality, too, are as complex and mysterious as his mother's gadgets. Even for their own entertainment, neither he nor his family nor even his neighborhood is self-sufficient, for all depend on impersonal, commercialized professionals. The child goes to the movies; he listens to the radio or watches television; he sits in a purchased automobile when the family takes him for a ride, and then the family may go to witness a professional sport spectacle, where, for the price of admission, the child has the privilege of sitting some more.

Factories are mysterious places for him, and to be truthful they do not welcome intruding and distracting visitors. For this kind of passive living, for this modern "spectatoritis," the old kind of education is totally inadequate. We must fill up this hollowness of living, this empty crust.

The project method in its encouragement of doing, making, planning; in its concept of the classroom as an active, dynamic, embryonic society; in its stress on individual interests; on active participation in group and community enterprises—this kind of education furnishes some of the raw firsthand experiences that the urban child normally cannot obtain otherwise.

In the execution of tasks—individually and communally—the child learns perseverance, responsibility, sharing, intercommunication, persistence; and from his failures in his tasks he builds, if properly guided, courage and spiritual strength.

CHAPTER XVIII

Mental Hygiene and the Project Method

WHEN Kilpatrick first conceived the project method he did not perceive as clearly as he does now, he says frankly, its full mental hygiene implication. Only recently have we come to understand what a powerful emotional and spiritual healing force resides in the successful pursuit of self-propelled interests; how it is needed in every life, no matter how humble or how great. Only recently, too, have we become aware of how insecurity, frustration, and failure corrode and damage peace of mind; how highly correlated they are with truancy, delinquency, neurosis, and psychosis.

In Kilpatrick's insistence on having the child work away and achieve in his own interests, growing and learning at his own rate and at his own level of ability; in his insistence that in the classroom there should be no competition, no marks, honors, prizes, or grades; that the classroom should be pervaded by a spirit of mutual helpfulness and cooperation, he was advocating what we have come to realize is the healthiest mental regime for child life.

We have already had occasion to refer to two forms of child rebellion in school. One group make their presence felt in a forcible and disagreeable manner; they are the delinquents, the truants, and the trouble-makers. As for the second group, teachers in the traditional school never regarded them as school problems. They sat quiet in their seats from nine to three; they never whispered; they never talked; they never bothered anyone. Students of mental hygiene have only recently come to realize that these shy, timid, retiring children are in the greatest danger. Denied success and adequacy in everyday living, such children find their success and satisfaction in an imaginary world; they imagine they are kings and queens, presidents of the United States, famous orators, famous writers, famous actors, famous artists; millionaires who live in great mansions with many servants.

For the good of the child, said Kilpatrick, we must destroy this imaginary world; we must bring this child back to reality; we must make his present living—right in the school—full of adventure and joy, so that through his activities, through his tasks, and through his interests he should find such zest of living, such current satisfaction that his imaginary world could not possibly compete. He was saying this in 1918 when few realized the menace of the passive, introverted child; in fact, when this nontroublesome child was held up as a model.

“. . . let us keep our children from living double lives—part open, avowed and ostensible, part hidden, secret, forbidden. The . . . teachers of the world have much to answer for in the way they have—in actual results—driven healthily active young people into double lives. We wish to scrutinize very closely any divisive scheme or plan of action which tends to break the child's life into two non-interacting parts . . . when it is demanded that childhood spend its best endeavor working at anything which is not continuous with its own growing life, we force upon the child a double life.”

For that reason he opposed “sugar coating,” that is, making “uninteresting subject matter” more palatable. If the child was to be integrated, if he was to develop the most desirable kind of character, wholehearted interests were essential. Kilpatrick said:

For a boy continually to spend his school days paying outward attention to school duties while inwardly he is thinking of other things is to build a divided self. The learning that comes under such conditions is hurt by the division and the boy's character is likely to be lowered in greater or less degree.¹

. . . a paramount school objective should be that a child shall not simply grow, but shall grow more and more unified. If we include as we must the social demands on each one, we might almost say the moral aim of education is summed up in the efforts to build a progressively unified character.²

As mental hygiene gains insight into what constitutes the wholesome personality, we are becoming more and more aware of the crucial importance of interests, tasks, attitudes in the formation of wholesome personalities. When a child does assigned tasks, without any readiness or mind-set, without any particular need for them; when these tasks are extrinsic, when they are done for marks or to please the teacher or parents, unfavorable or neutral attitudes to the task itself become probable. Here, too, there is ever present the danger of divided personality, out-

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, *Foundations of Method* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), pp. 171-172.

² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

ward compliance and inward boredom, outward attention and inward daydreaming. Certainly in such a school there is not likely to develop the enthusiastic, zestful, joyous activity that comes from successfully meeting one's own needs and carrying out one's own purposes. One of the essential needs of the human being, if he is to be an integrated person, is that he have some objective into which he can pour his whole self. In fact Burnham, in his classic book *The Normal Mind*, declares that the minimal essentials for mental health are a task, a plan, and freedom.³ In fact, so great is his faith in these essentials that he says that no one can experience a serious mental disorder if he has them. Says Burnham:

"... in all affairs of life the word *task* denotes the serious business of life and at the same time suggests the zest of healthful activity in every true workman who does honest work and enjoys the doing of it. This zest of doing a task is the highest attraction to children in a normal environment."⁴

And this fundamental need, some undertaking into which a person can pour his best self, through which he can plan and hope, is necessary for "young and old, rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated, the different emotional and ideational types, the individual with robust health and the invalid alike."⁵

We are now coming to recognize that when the child has no self-appointed tasks, when he does not find his pleasure in working away at his own purposes, the child is headed for personality maladjustments.

The project method, as conceived by Kilpatrick, exemplified the best principles of mental hygiene. For in Kilpatrick's emphasis on tasks and purposes, he encouraged a school where children can confer, do things, and make things. As a child achieves at his tasks, as he grows in ability in overcoming the problems that confront him, as he faces his environmental situation realistically, he is ever growing more able to meet present and future problems. As he is successful in reality, he finds joy and zest in living; also he finds in this success security that comes from strength and confidence in his growing awareness of his ability to meet problems. And also he is gaining, concomitantly, in the mastery of skills, techniques, and information necessary to meet problems.

When children decide, for instance, to give a play, how many opportunities exist for interacting, for conferring, for planting, for discussion, for getting to know and to understand one another better! First, there is

³ W. H. Burnham, *The Normal Mind* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1924), p. 302.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

the problem of choosing the play, then of dramatizing it, then of making costumes, then of painting scenery, then of inviting an audience, then of managing the necessary routine details incidental to such a performance. What a golden opportunity for the exercise of initiative, creativeness, ingenuity, cooperation, perseverance; for finding unsuspected talents and abilities; for matching a task and a responsibility with children's varied talents, aptitudes, and abilities. Here there must be give-and-take, here there must be commingling and *practicing* of "getting along with others." If the undertaking is wisely directed, what rich potentials exist for real character development, which comes from sticking to a task and seeing it through successfully! How meager and puny in comparison are the learning that can possibly eventuate from traditional bookish assignments!

CHAPTER XIX

The Task and the Project

IN REAL life, the self-initiated task is the most important source of learning. Under the influence of the Platonic and the Aristotelian concept of education, the school has not made use of the power inherent in the task. How the task can vitalize life, and give it meaning and purpose, how it can exalt life, and make life inspiring beyond all imagination, is fairly common knowledge, yet educationally, our schools have stayed aloof from building on students' tasks.

"Without a fixed point outside myself, I cannot exist," says Ibsen.

Even in mental institutions the need of tasks for the reeducation and the rehabilitation of the emotionally unstable has become recognized; and with such a program, many persons find their way back to normalcy and happy living by achieving in tasks and purposes.

When Vincent Van Gogh was confined in a mental institution, the doctors were loath to encourage him to seek solace in his painting; they thought the attendant excitement might retard his improvement. But Van Gogh had greater insight into his own needs than his doctors. "Doctor Peyron, my work is necessary for me to recover," he said. "If you make me sit about in idleness, like those madmen, I shall become one of them."¹ And as soon as Van Gogh began again to work, his improvement was marked and rapid.

"A well-managed regime of purposeful activity," said Kilpatrick, "freed from artificial and external demands of subject matter requirements promises not only the best preventive of personality maladjustment but often furnishes an indispensable part of any adequate remedial treatment. To learn to pursue worthy ends with honest study and appropriate action is nature's road to mental health."²

Here was a child in the sixth grade in the Lincoln School. He was

¹ Irving Stone, *Lust for Life* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1946), p. 433.

² W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Essentials of the Activity Movement," *Progressive Education*, October, 1924.

passive and inert, but he had one engrossing interest: electricity. The children were presenting a play, and they thought it would be wonderful if they had footlights, "like in a real theater." But they did not know how to proceed. The teacher asked: "What can we do? Does anyone know about such things?" One of the children said: "Why, John knows."

The class turned to John; certainly he would help; he would be glad to help. And John did succeed in installing footlights that actually worked. In recounting this story, Kilpatrick said that what amazed him was how that boy changed, not only in his attitude toward school, but also toward his classmates and his home. He now had a task, and in success from his task, in the recognition he obtained from his task, he had found new worth and power and new inner strength.

Kilpatrick relates this story: A former teacher from Horace Mann School opened her own school in the Bronx. A mother, who had come from Germany, believed in the dictatorial type of education. She was loath to send her daughter to this new school, but since there wasn't any good school nearby, she had no choice. Some months later, she told the teacher: "I want to tell you that I can't recognize the girl; your school has just made her over. Before, she would sit around and say, 'Mother, I don't know what to do. What shall I do?'" She simply was not interested in anything. Now she has more things to do than time in which to do them. She can hardly wait to get up in the morning, and when she does, she wants to rush right off to school. When she returns from school, she immediately gets busy; she has so many things she wants to do and does."

It was Shaw who, when past seventy, was asked what constituted happiness. He said, in effect: "I don't know what does. I have been so busy working that I have had no time for that nonsense." Happiness, he added, was not something to seek like a lost cuff link, for that was the best way to miss it. Happiness, he said, was a concomitant of activity and work.

"The secret of being miserable is to have leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not," wrote Shaw. "The cure for it is occupation, because occupation means preoccupation; and the preoccupied person is neither happy nor unhappy, but simply active and alive, which is pleasanter than any happiness until you are tired of it. This is why it is necessary to happiness that one should be tired. Music after dinner is pleasant, music before breakfast is so unpleasant as to be clearly unnatural. To people who are not overworked holidays are a nuisance. To people who are, and can afford them, they are a troublesome necessity. A perpetual holiday is a good working definition of hell."³

In all areas of life, among the lofty and among the humble, we can

³ Hesketh Pearson, *G.B.S.: A Full Length Portrait* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 112-113.

observe the beneficence, the healing power of tasks and interests, of what Kilpatrick calls "purposeful activity." There was the little old lady who saw her neighborhood school dark at night, closed and useless. She interested her neighbors; she wrote to public officials. The school was eventually opened, and, what had once been a dark building became full of life and activity. The school became a community center for forums, plays, discussion groups, for classes in sewing, cooking, handicrafts. True enough, the community became a better community because of it; but so did that little old lady become better: she also grew and to her also was added life.

In one neighborhood, delinquent gangs committed such depredations that life became hazardous for the residents. Not only did the gang's activities detract from life, but the youths themselves were developing vicious and antisocial habits. The boys in this gang were saved by tasks, by purposeful activity. Under the guidance of a social worker, the boys were organized into a club; the gang was set to the task of cleaning up dirty back alleys; they supervised younger children at games and recreational activities; they entertained the adults on the block with moving-picture performances; they helped where they could. It is needless to say that there was a radical change in the outlook and attitude of this gang, and it is needless to say that each boy became better.

Here is a story of an old man, Meichel Pressman by name, who at the age of eighty-four had a one-man exhibit of his paintings in a New York art gallery. Mr. Pressman was originally an immigrant, and he worked most of his life in a sweatshop making garments. He suffered a heart attack, and later his leg was amputated. Thoroughly discouraged and disheartened, he thought that life was over for him. As he says, "I was hard to live with." His wife bought him a box of crayons so as to divert him from his ailments. And his life thereafter was never the same; he became spiritually rich as he grew in a new interest. Eight months later, at the age of eighty-four, he was invited by a New York art gallery to show his pictures. "Now," says Mr. Pressman, "the day can't start soon enough."⁴

In discussing what constitutes the wholesome personality, Professor Allport writes as follows:

In the first place, the developed person is one who has a variety of autonomous interests; that is, he can lose himself in work, in contemplation, in recreation, and in loyalty to others. Egocentricity is not the mark of a mature personality. Contrast the garrulous Bohemian, egotistical, self-pitying, and prating of self-expression, with the man of confident dignity who has identified himself with a cause that has won his devotion. Paradoxically, self-

⁴ "He Paints at 84, Has One-Man Show," *New York Times*, March 17, 1949.

expression requires the capacity to lose oneself in the pursuit of objectives, *not* primarily referred to the self. Unless directed outward toward socialized and cultural compatible ends, unless absorbed in causes and goals that outshine self-pity and vanity, any life seems dwarfed and immature. . . . These goals represent an *extension of self* which may be said to be the first requirement for maturity and personality.⁵

In the school, from early childhood, there should be this freedom to dedicate oneself to tasks and to consummate tasks. As Whitehead has said, "freedom of action is a primary human need." And only that man is free, according to Thomas Hobbes, who "is not hindered to do what he has a will to do" and "by his strength and wit he is able to do."

The traditional school system enslaved children: they worked on tasks and "purposes" not their own, but those of others. In the project method, as postulated by Kilpatrick, willing, wanting, doing, purposing were restored to children, and by it their lives were made free and whole and their own.

⁵ Gordon W. Allport, *Personality* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1937), p. 213.

CHAPTER XX

The Project Method and the Life Good to Live

NO MAN can live alone without hurt to himself," said Kilpatrick. Man is a social creature, his language, his behavior, his emotions, and his feelings are socially learned. In living with and among people he must find his happiness. He took strong issue with the Platonic and Aristotelian school of thought that the highest good is to want nothing. Rather, Kilpatrick held that "he lives most who thinks most—feels the noblest—acts the best,"¹ The whole purpose of life is growth, to be able to do better and finer those socially desirable objectives which one pursued yesterday; to be able to make ever-finer discriminations. The last day of life should be a continuation and a growth of yesterday's growth. All human beings—children included—should immerse themselves in the active, throbbing life of this universe. "As life is action and passion," said Justice Holmes, "it is required of a man that he should share the passion and the action of his time, at the peril of being judged not to have lived."

Kilpatrick accepted Dewey's definition of growth, namely, "the release of capacity from whatever hems it in."

Kilpatrick believed there was a hierarchy of growth, and in this connection he posed the following scale: "... a lamb skipping about from sheer excess of organic vitality; a child giving her doll a tea party; a skilled cook preparing a choice meal; Leonardo painting the Mona Lisa. . . . But in the life content . . . they differ. The factor of ordered and refined complexity of living stands lowest with the lamb and increases to the highest in Leonardo. In this sense, he who lives most has most freedom.

"What gives man his manifold superiority to the beast is, at bottom,

¹ Quotation from poem by Philip James Bailey.

his power of conscious action and assertion; it is the varying quality of his conscious self-direction which gives us the scale of comparative valuing of personality. We value that personality which, in deciding what to do, shows at once the greatest insight into life's problems, the greatest refinements of distinction made, the most inclusive and best ordered view of each whole situation, and the most determined attitude of good will toward all concerned. Now all men have potential in them more or less of the highest qualities. Greatness, however, we assign not to mere potentiality, but rather to active realization. Because the human personality has such potentialities we respect personality wherever found; but it is the degree of these highest qualities actively manifest in conscious action that permits us, and even commands us, to assign to each personality its just measure of human greatness."²

He cannot conceive of any philosophy of life that contends that we should eat and be merry for tomorrow we die. He quotes with disapprobation Thoreau, who said "a man is rich in the proportion of things he can let alone," and Heine, who wrote:

For sleep is good, but death is better still—
The best is never to be born at all.

The best life is based on growth in self-propelling, stirring interests that grip and challenge life and become so absorbing that they overshadow life itself, and become more important than life; so that an individual has no time to die, for he has too much to do.

It is these interests, ever growing, ever becoming more varied, that make life rich and worth while, that offer the greatest possibility for human happiness. As Bacon said, "The more good things we are interested in, the more ardently we live."

It is a Marie Curie, who, when she thought she was about to die, bluntly spoke up to God, telling him that she had no time for this nonsense, not now; she had too much to do to bother with death—it is she who was living the good life. It is a Booth Tarkington, seventy-six, frail, sick, nearly blind, who struggled to the end to finish his novel, who wins Kilpatrick's approbation. It is a Marcel Proust, who at three o'clock in the morning called in his maid and from his deathbed dictated to her further portions of his work on how it feels to die³—it is he who was living the good life. Another example of this kind is Arturo Toscanini, the famous orchestra leader, who when visited by reporters on his eighty-second birthday was found engrossed in an orchestra rehearsal for a

² *Philosophy of Education*, p. 120. This statement appeared in the original draft of the manuscript, but was modified in the finished book.

³ *Letters of Marcel Proust*, review in *Time*, February 21, 1949, p. 10.

performance of *Aïda* to be given the next day. Toscanini told the reporters plainly that he wanted no fuss made about his birthday. Maybe when he was ninety he might bother about such things.⁴

Deep, engrossing interests, activity leading to further activity; gripping, challenging activity, growing geometrically, becoming ever broader and wider, interests that became so deep seated and engrossing that they overshadowed life itself—this was the good life, as conceived by Kilpatrick.

There should be no completion, no end, only growth, for that is the whole story of the good life. "In this world," said Oscar Wilde, "there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it. The last is much the worse: the last is the real tragedy." Dewey said: "If it is better to travel than to arrive, it is because traveling is a constant arriving, while arrival that precludes further traveling is most easily attained by going to sleep or dying."⁵

Kilpatrick sought an active, participating life; but he pointed out that all activities were not equally desirable. War, gambling, alcoholic excesses, may lead on powerfully for a while but in the long run instead of growth they lead to reduced living.

In discussing self-indulgence, Kilpatrick has said that it cannot provide happiness "since it tends to run out, to destroy itself both in the individual life and the lives of others involved. The term 'selfish' likewise indicates the unsatisfactory character of conduct that tends to stop with itself. Selfishness, we believe, is on the whole as truly unsatisfactory to the individual as to others. Again, the old person who ceases to grow becomes uninteresting to himself and to others. Life becomes a bore. The term 'materialistic' as applied to conduct gets its ugliness from the limitation it puts on the life processes of its devotees. The charm of a new thought is in proportion as it beckons us to hidden vistas. The man is unduly and hurtfully 'set in his ways' who does not recognize the allurements and will not follow its lead. To him who can see it, the end of growth is growth.

"Now education is in essence [proper] growing. The end of education is then more growing. It is in this sense that education is life. At each stage of education and of life we should most wish those activities that in turn must lead to other similar fruitful activities. By this criterion we test life and education, institutions and procedures."

Kilpatrick wanted each person so to live and so to do that what he

⁴ "Toscanini Is 82 Today; Will Work as Usual." *New York Times*, March 25, 1949.

⁵ Dewey at seventy attributed his happiness to three things: his work (he would rather work than eat); his marriage, which he said was purely a matter of chance; his family.

wanted and sought that was good for himself and for his family he should want and seek to make available to every other person and every other family. Since he is a social creature, every individual is mandated so to live and so to do that there should ensue community growth, national growth, world growth. Each individual should decide what is his best and highest good as thus defined; he should accept responsibility to effect it and pour out all his energies in its achievement. When the individual acts thus he is "neither selfish nor selfless, but is intelligently pursuing ends that one has in common with others." And in this regard, Kilpatrick says, "He who would save his life must give it."

Every act of a person should be animated by a reliance upon and an acceptance of "tested thought." The emphasis should be on trying a "thought" out. If it makes things better all around, hold on to the change. If it doesn't, try something else. This experimental attitude was pithily and graphically stated by a steel manufacturer when he explained how he went about creating a new machine. "We start her up first," he said, "and then we find out why she doesn't go."⁶

In Kilpatrick's thinking, there was no predestination, no predetermination; man's decisions and efforts mattered, for good or for ill. There was no limit, no boundaries to this expanding, evolving "unlidded" universe. There was no stop, no end, no finality; improvement should only lead to more improvement and growth. The final resource for all good is the free, roaming, unfettered mind dedicated to the highest common good.

"To feel oneself increasing in what one counts good, both psychologically and ethically, gives to life the quality of 'worthwhileness' we can both enjoy and approve," he said. "If this continues and abides, we have happiness. If then we count as good these activities that bring growing, not only to us, but also to others, and not only now but also in the future and as far as we can foresee, then we have in such activities what seems the greatest possible promise of happiness for all concerned. This is what we mean by growing, and this is how we identify the good life with it. It is on this growing edge that life finds its edge. What we can all do and have often done loses its interest unless it is joined in some way to unaccustomed things."

As we examine Kilpatrick's project method we see how it is not merely a methodology of teaching but, also, a sound basis for a philosophy of a life good to live. In the project method the child works on his own and on common tasks and purposes. In these interests he finds satisfaction; and in the process he grows, for he learns skills and techniques

⁶ Told by Allan Nevins about John Fritz in "The Audacious Americans," *Life*, January 2, 1950.

and procedures which permit him to grapple with ever more difficult tasks and purposes. In gaining satisfaction from these tasks and purposes he is learning how to find happiness and joy of living in mastering the problems of his environment, as he perceives them. This is a never-ending process; in this kind of education there is no stop; in this kind of education there is only activity leading to further activity; in this kind of education there is the hope and the prospect of the development of deep-seated interests and purposes, so that these interests and purposes overshadow life, and become more important than life itself. Only by losing life can one gain life. In the project method we have a methodology that offers the best possibility of achieving this objective.

CHAPTER XXI

Thinking, Action, and the Project Method

WHILE on a trip to India in 1926, Kilpatrick met several educated Hindus, and to them he propounded this question: "What Eastern educational practices would you wish to discard and what Western educational practices would you want to adopt? What combination of Eastern and Western culture would you approve?" They were intrigued by the question and they thought it was a good question. They talked and they talked. But they made no real effort to reach any decision or agreement.

"To them, thinking," Kilpatrick observed, "was just like a game. They really didn't mean to do anything about the problem. They were making intellectual moves—like a chess player pushing around pieces. They really didn't mean to solve the problem or come to any conclusions that might change the situation. They spoke and they argued as one plays a game, displaying skill, so that others might admire."¹

He tells of another experience during the same visit to India, when a former student brought together several local university professors, graduate students, and missionaries. He asked the group a question of a similar nature. One professor said it was a good question, but before one could come to any decision it was necessary to consider another question. No sooner did they settle down to a discussion of this other question than the professor again said that before they could answer that, "we must consider this further question," and the process went on

¹ Omar Khayyám, in his *Rubáiyát*, had occasion to refer to this kind of discussion:
Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument
About it and about; but ever more
Came out by the same door wherein I went.

until the assemblage was heatedly involved in determining the nature of God.

"It took nearly an hour for us to reach this detour," relates Kilpatrick. "After this waste of time, I was so put out that I could hardly be courteous. 'Let's start over again,' I said, 'let's come back to the original question.' Then another professor rose to say that the original question was a good one, but before it could be considered, we first had to decide another and then another until finally whether Australia was justified in excluding immigrant Indians as citizens."

Commenting on this experience, Kilpatrick said: "These men coming from the past were engaging in mental gymnastics; they talked just to pass the time of day. They didn't discuss with reference to getting anywhere; they didn't discuss with any notion of solving a problem, or even wanting to solve a problem. They talked mainly to carry on a high-class conversation."²

In this connection, Kilpatrick noted in his diary (April 8, 1931) that he read *Reason and Nature* by Professor Morris R. Cohen of the College of the City of New York. "He is capable but I don't like it. I seem to see in it the same dialectical sword fencing which I often find in Jewish minds. The Jewish intellect has, historically, been nurtured in the Talmud, being denied significant opportunity in life at large for thought to direct affairs. Thought has therefore turned in on itself and become dialectic in a bad sense, looking for captious opportunities at sticking in a sword here and a spear there, with no constructive aim."

Kilpatrick wanted thinking to eventuate in action and action into further thinking. He had little sympathy for idle speculation or thinking

²I am deeply indebted to Professor Hopkins, a long-time Teachers College associate and friend of Professor Kilpatrick, who in the course of two lengthy interviews clarified and deepened my understanding of the latter's concept of thinking and action, and their implications for education. This "chess-game" thinking is prevalent in Europe, particularly in Germany. It is strong in all countries where thinking has been divorced from action. Here people talk and discuss, not to carry out practical purposes, but mostly for display and entertainment. To illustrate: In Germany, as in India, the people's thinking did not matter. In Germany they lived under authoritarian government, where they were told what to do. In India the school system was oriented to British culture; in fact, for many years students of India's secondary schools had to prepare for matriculation examinations sent out from the University of London, and they were the same matriculation examinations prepared for English students. For one thousand years India had been governed by foreign powers. This divorce of thinking and action encouraged the spinning of idle theories that led nowhere. As Kilpatrick would say: They think they're thinking, but in reality they're only rearranging their prejudices; they're only rationalizing their previous prejudices. They do not emerge from such experiences in any way that changes their actions or the meaning of their actions.

for thinking's sake. The only way to test thinking was in action: there was no other way. "Thinking," he said, "unless it works isn't worth anything." Kilpatrick rejected what, according to Professor Nevins, James rejected, namely, "fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, towards power."³

Action and thinking, for Kilpatrick, went together; they could not be divorced. Thought and thinking had for him significance only as they affected deeds and outcomes; only as they were concomitants of socially useful problem solving. It was this kind of purposeful thinking that Kilpatrick glorified, especially purposeful thinking that sought to promote a better kind of living for everyone.

To get people stirred up about something and then do nothing about it, no matter how laudable the cause, was to him something akin to immorality. "If we get stirred up and do nothing about it, we next time have to increase the dose of being stirred up."⁴

At another point, he said: "If a person is sensitive merely and does nothing about it, does not think what to do about it, then life is not moving well. Sensitive thinking, doing, means that the right process is going on."⁵

Thinking should serve as a preparation for action, and the action, in turn, should influence the course of thinking:

Those who advocate action as if it might be properly opposed to thinking, probably betray the classical, the intellectual origin, of their mode of thinking. The dualistic separation of thought and emotion, of impulse or action, following Kant and Hegel, sunk deep into European thought. . . . In America, separation is perhaps most often heard in "practical" circles where "theory" is suspect.

To separate thought and action is dangerous in the degree that it is done. To act without thinking carries its own condemnation. . . . To think without intending to relate thought and action is, first, to reject the only final basis we have for testing and correcting thought, viz, by the way it works out when tried. It is, second, to build an immoral character, for the disposition to think before acting and to act upon one's best thinking—these are the essence of the moral character.

To avoid acting or to postpone it unduly is not only futile, but criminal. . . .

³ Allan Nevins in "The Audacious American," *Life*, January 2, 1950.

⁴ W. H. Kilpatrick, "A General Review and Evaluation of Present Method," *Religious Education*, June, 1919.

⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, "What Is Education," Round Table Conference, published by Ethical Culture Society (Vol. 10).

It is thought and action, an act and thought, in indefinitely mutual interaction that we need—thought and action joined in closest ties together. That is our only safe rule.⁶

Kilpatrick declared that an act of thought not only involved the action itself, but extended out to its end consequences.⁷

To illustrate: A child is at the task of mowing the lawn; several friends come along and urge him to play ball with them. There emerges a conflict for the child. Much as he would like to play ball, he knows that if he leaves the task he incurs the displeasure of his parents: if he remains with it, he wins their approval. According to Kilpatrick, an act of thought encompasses the whole situation, from beginning to end, with all its consequences. All thinking, he says, if it is adequate thinking, anticipates the results of an action before it takes place.

For that reason he placed such emphasis on purposing, planning, discussing, on the intercommunication of ideas; he wanted children to discuss among themselves, teachers to discuss with children, teachers to discuss with teachers, teachers to discuss with supervisors, supervisors with each other, parents with all areas of school life, school personnel with all agencies in a community.

He wanted children to try out in the classroom what they had discussed and planned. There was that party they gave for parents; there was that play they performed; there was that exhibit they held; there was that trip they made; there was that mural they painted. What could be learned from the experience; what did they do that was good, what did they do that was bad? What changes did the experience suggest, so that next time whatever was done would be done better? It was this thinking through, taking note of *consequences*, regarding every act as an experimental device for testing thinking; this combination of thinking and acting, this desire to modify, evaluate, criticize, change, make over—this, Kilpatrick believed, was a crucial part both of thinking and of the educative process.

There are psychologists and sociologists who declare that there are two zones in the human personality, the established zone and the fluid zone. When a child is born he is all fluid, but we build into him fixed zones by inculcating in him taboos, customs, traditions, values. The greater the proportion of his fixed zone the less able he is to learn, the

⁶ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Action vs. Thought and Action," *Social Frontier*, Vol. V, No. 46, June, 1939, pp. 261-262.

⁷ For this portion of the discussion, I am again indebted to Professor Hopkins; it was he who clarified for me the concept of fluid zones and its bearing on Kilpatrick's project method.

more fixed and set he is the less is he able to think independently and creatively. Kilpatrick wants the child to grow up with a maximum of fluid zone, so that in his living he will be truly fresh, malleable, and creative, so that he will use his intelligence (tested thought) in all areas of life. Instead of inculcating in the child fixed concepts and attitudes, instead of inculcating in him routine and habit, Kilpatrick wants the child from his very earliest school days to learn the experimental approach, to use the scientific method for solving the problems of living. If human beings will fearlessly, honestly, and creatively act on their best thinking, he believes that the whole quality of living can be enormously raised; that it will explosively and stirringly release individuals' energies, capacities, and abilities to unparalleled heights.

This concept of thinking provides a strong *raison d'être* for the project method. For in the project method the emphasis is on tasks and purposes; on fresh and creative approaches by individuals to environmental problems; on intercommunication, discussion, planning; on thinking and action; on "fluid zone" living; on experimental and scientific attitudes; on the use of intelligence rather than on routine and habit; on working together on common, socially desirable ends; on thinking as stabs in the dark and as a novel adventure in a changing, dynamic universe. In this approach to education, we have a truly expanding kind of living, truly creative. The project method realizes the dictum of Carlyle: "the end of man is an action, not a thought." In the project method the child can, as Kant advised, "dare to think" for himself.

CHAPTER XXII

The Teacher and the Project Method

OPPONENTS of the project method have often accused its adherents of wanting to substitute the whims and caprices of children for the intelligence of professionally trained teachers. Kilpatrick often said: It was true that the good teacher eliminated himself; that the teacher should seek to create such able, self-directing persons that the need for an external directing power would become unnecessary. What he had in mind was children so engrossed in their tasks, so able to manage the techniques and skills necessary for their tasks, that they became increasingly independent of external direction. This was the aim, to be sure, to strive for, but the teacher must be there to guide as needed. As he said: "In any school learning, it is the teacher that represents the wisdom of the race."

For practical purposes, the teacher in the classroom is essential, for he is more intelligent, more mature, more experienced in situations; he is professionally trained for his task. Certainly Kilpatrick does not want to eliminate the teacher; he wishes the teacher so to teach that the child can become more and more adequate in meeting the demands of his environment, so that the child will require progressively less and less of the teacher's help.

In answer to the question as to what constitutes an ideal teacher, Kilpatrick said: First of all, the teacher should love children and should love to be with them. He should be interested in children and know in general their interests. He should be able to tap the interests of children so that they can work out a program of wholesome activities. He should believe in children and believe that education should start from and with children, not from a textbook or a course of study.

Furthermore, the teacher should know the civilization and the environment in which the children live and be able to guide them intelligently,

for to Kilpatrick education is synonymous with guidance. The teacher should start with where the children are and help them to live up to the best that is in them, as far as he can. He should be able to recognize the good things in each child, and encourage and help him to grow in those things. He should seek to bring into the classroom the actualities of living, since it is "from these inherent demands of life that we get our ethical standards," and from them character is forged. This week's living in school should prepare children for better and finer living next week.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer that Kilpatrick wanted all experiences to end successfully. In real life, individuals encounter many failures, and he wanted the child to become acquainted with failure as a part of experience and learn how to profit constructively from such failure. If, however, the child by a failure will be injured, then the teacher should step in and save the situation. "The wise teacher will help before too great discouragement takes place." In these respects, the teacher plays a most important professional role.

This does not mean that he wants the teacher to do anything for children that they can do fruitfully for themselves. He wants the classroom to be essentially a place where children purpose, plan, execute, and evaluate. He does not want teachers to rob children of their tasks, for always he is seeking the development of personalities who are self-directing, intelligent, independent, able to carry out tasks and purposes and cooperate for common ends. It is true that teachers can open windows, distribute books, write invitations, plan exhibits, decorate rooms, etc., better than children can. It is true that it is easier for teachers to direct schoolroom activities, but that is not helping the child.

If the child is to learn, it is he who must do the doing. And if the teacher is to teach well, he should place a maximum of responsibility for both conception and execution of tasks on children. Here is a boy who is given detailed directions as to how to plant corn; another boy is told where he can find certain information. The first boy, it is true, raises more corn at the end of the year,

but what are you after, corn or the boy? Are you after educating or are you after getting a yield of corn? . . . Learning something that someone else has thought is not the same as thinking for one's self.

If we faced a world that was absolutely unchanging; if we already knew everything about it . . . it is conceivable that we should and ought to teach the child precise plans. But since we face a world that is changing, and the best way of raising corn now will not be the best way twenty-five years from now, we should see to it that the boy shall think and not follow prescribed plans. . . . I know from my own experience that I have to go all around a thing,

look at it, keep looking and working at it, if I am going to get any intelligent grasp of it. If you think a thing through, you can make intelligent adaptations. If you just take it on somebody's say so, you cannot make adaptations.¹

In this he was adamant: The teacher should not make a practice of substituting his purposes and wishes for the child's. It is the child and the children who should originate tasks and purposes. The best and the richest learnings result only when self-propelled interests are being carried out. He has no use for "sugar coating" subject matter. And he has even less use for perverting the project method to inculcate set-in-advance and prescribed subject matter. It is the children's purposes and tasks, as they conceive them and as they purpose them, that should be the basis for instruction. In this regard Kilpatrick has been misunderstood. "Some who like to call themselves progressive have gone no further than to think of making this subject matter interesting—'palatable' might be the better word."² It so happens, as we shall see later, that traditional subject matter is better learned with the project as a method, but that is only incidental to its main purpose. "But to repeat, it is first, last, and all the time not subject matter which must immediately concern us, but life and personality and their best growth."³

For that reason he wanted no curriculum set in advance, nor did he want teachers to "sell" or foist subject matter on the child. Once you have a curriculum set in advance, the child is forgotten, and those who do not meet standards or who deviate from set patterns are corralled back to the set enclosure. Under this arrangement there is the ever-present and inherent danger that the child will be coerced, and coercion "seldom builds desirable habits."⁴

Even preplanned unit material (learning about a whole subject, such as communication, building homes, China, folk dances) has in it the same dangers and is to be avoided. If you take these units

as things to be taught . . . it ruins the whole business. I know a case like that. One of the teachers in a demonstration school in the fifth grade taught the children a unit in cotton. The next year someone mentioned cotton. One child said, "Don't mention cotton to me. We had nothing but cotton all last year. We played cotton, worked cotton!" . . . Everything was cotton. They went to the gymnasium and went through the motions of picking cotton. They

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Project Method," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 25, 1921.

² W. H. Kilpatrick, "A Reconstructed Theory of the Educative Process," *Teachers College Record*, 32:530-58, March, 1931.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

sang cotton; made cotton dresses; had everything about cotton until the children were just bored to death. Now in this case that was a unit of subject matter set out to be learned. . . . That is not progressive education. It is just another way of organizing matter.⁵

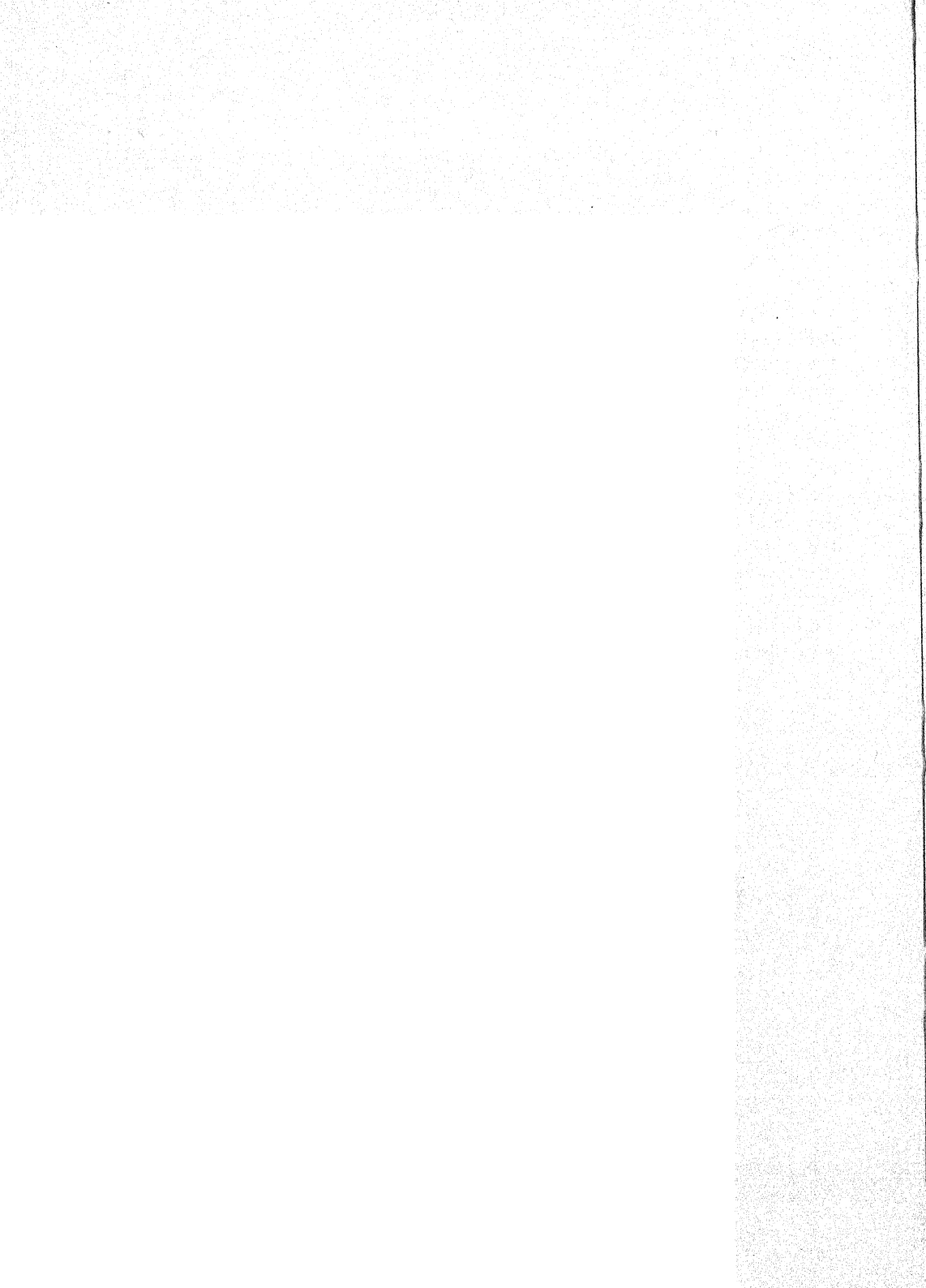
In direct contradistinction to the foregoing illustration of undesirable practices, Kilpatrick cited with approval the following:

In one school an eighth-grade class had become so undisciplined that the school could not find a teacher to cope with them. Two teachers had given up in despair, and now they had a third—a sixth grade teacher who had never taught the eighth grade—Miss Josephine Maloney. She had taken work the previous summer with Professor Kilpatrick. She continued the regular routine, but in one respect she made a change. She gave them a half hour during the day in which they could work at anything they pleased, provided they could persuade the teacher that it was a worth-while activity.

Said Kilpatrick: "The children at first couldn't think of anything they wanted to do. One boy said he wanted to read a book. The teacher said that that was all right. A girl said she'd like to draw. The teacher said that that was all right. Another girl wanted to cut pictures out of one book and paste them in another. The teacher said that that was all right. Finally, one boy came up to her and said he wanted to run a newspaper. She asked him how he meant to go about doing it. He said: 'I'll take a sheet of paper, and I'll put on top the name of the paper, and I'll divide the rest of the sheet into columns and I'll print the news in those.' The teacher said, 'Very good.' So the boy set to work. The next day another boy said, 'I'd like to work with him on the newspaper.' The teacher said, 'All right, you two can work together.' The next day another boy came up and said that he had talked with his father and why can't we type-write the newspaper. The teacher said, 'Very good. That will be all right.' Several other boys joined when they heard of this typewritten newspaper. Another boy soon came along and said that his father, who was a printer, told him: 'If you children ran a good newspaper, you could get advertising, and then you could afford to have it printed.' And so the children started to work on this basis, and it wasn't long before the whole class wanted to join in the enterprise. They then said, 'A half hour isn't enough. This newspaper work is English. Why can't we take the English period for it?' That was exactly what that teacher was hoping for. After a while, enlarging and increasing on this work, the

⁵ Mimeographed report of a conference of teachers of the Webster Groves (Mo.) Public Schools at Northwestern University, 1940.

whole day was gradually brought over on this basis, but the change was made no faster than the children would go and no faster than the teacher could make it work, because the teacher too had to learn how to teach on this new basis. Both the teacher and the children had to learn how to work together. You cannot start this kind of teaching by setting aside a date, say Monday, and then insisting that from Monday on, everything will change. After the eighth grade had fully remade itself on this basis, it made such a good impression on the school that the seventh grade said: 'If they can do it in the eighth grade, why can't we do it in the seventh grade?' And then when the seventh grade did it, the sixth grade said: 'Why can't we do it in our grade?' And thus it went right through the whole school. Since this was a demonstration school of a teachers' college, the college students said: 'If this method is good for the children, why isn't it good for the teachers who are going to teach children?' So they arranged the college in this wise; one half of the college was run on the traditional plan and the other half on the new basis; and the students could choose the kind of instruction they wanted. In a short time, practically everyone was convinced that the new method was vastly better; and when they became teachers, principals, supervisors, critic teachers, they spread this method all over the state."



PART V

Kilpatrick: The Teacher and the Man

CHAPTER XXIII

"The Million Dollar Professor"

TO DESCRIBE a great teacher is difficult. To delineate the power of a writer, there are his books; for the artist, there are his pictures; for the doctor, there are his wondrous cures; for the lawyer, there are his dramatic courtroom acquittals. For the great teacher, there is none of this. While in a classroom the students show no overt or dramatic changes. Physically, they appear the same before and after a class. Nonetheless, in Kilpatrick's classes, cataclysmic changes went on, internal, quiet, gradual, often not perceived by the student himself until time had elapsed. There were changes in attitudes, in outlook, in viewpoint, in the philosophy of living, in an increased release of student talents and potentialities. Even though such changes may be soul searing, they produce little overt or physical manifestation.

Kilpatrick was probably the greatest teacher of his generation. His influence was enormous. Students flocked to him from all over the world, and no classroom at Columbia University was large enough to hold them; eventually, they gathered in the Horace Mann auditorium, and later into a still larger auditorium, the McMillin Theater. During the summer sessions, the number of students had to be limited, for there was no place large enough to hold all who wanted to attend. In all, Kilpatrick had approximately thirty-five thousand students. They came from every state in the Union and about sixty foreign countries. His students were so numerous and ardent in loyalty that one Columbia professor in derision called the summer session a "projectory." His students paid to the university over a million dollars¹ in fees, which was accounted as a record intake for any professor.

Kilpatrick's great power lay in his ability to get average, ordinary people—men and women who were normally concerned with clothes, automo-

¹ A copyreader for the *New York Post* wrote the headline "Here Is a Million Dollar Professor" over an interview with him written by David Davidson, which appeared in that newspaper March 6, 1937; and the title caught on.

biles, sporting events, money, and jobs—to become as excited about an educational principle, an ethical precept, a psychological concept as about the outcome of a football game or the latest national scandal or the newest fashion vogue. In his classes ordinary men and women became philosophers, wrestling with fundamental, crucial problems. In his classes there was a heated, earnest give-and-take that one does not ordinarily associate with the classroom. It savored more of deliberative bodies, whose decisions were fraught with far-reaching significance. The way to judge a personality, Professor Allport has said, is to find out what sort of person one becomes in his presence.

In Kilpatrick's presence, students became purposeful thinkers, anxious to find the truth and to seek out fundamental meanings. In his classroom, students argued over the merits of an abstract idea with the same sense of importance as a prospective buyer of an automobile or television set seeks to discover the merits of the various makes. I have used this homely, mundane comparison deliberately because his students in the main were not philosophers; they were teachers, social workers, school principals, students who normally took courses principally to acquire sufficient credits for a degree. In Kilpatrick's presence these everyday men and women became transformed.

Kilpatrick tried to bring the best thoughts of all times and all places—and he had a wide and expert knowledge of classical thinking and literature—to bear on problems that were of immediate and pressing concern for his students. And in this regard he was gifted with an uncanny ability to take the most abstruse and the loftiest thinking of philosophers and scientists and to make their thinking simple and pertinent, with visible and immediate bearing on current, meaningful problems.

Even in his first days as a teacher Kilpatrick did not want a course to end in an examination or a discarded textbook. He wanted thinking and action to go together. A favorite phrase of his was: "I see; I can; I do." Students in his classes became imbued with a missionary zeal, with a desire to act and live differently, to go back to their own environments and to change things, to improve, to discard, to reexamine old ways, and to view all things anew in the light of "tested thought."

Withal, the enthusiasm and the love that Kilpatrick begot from his students were beyond all imagination. The most frequent thing that students said of him was: "He changed my life; I see things differently now, the whole world seems different."

Let us try to gain an insight into how he conducted his classes. He wanted, as we have seen, students to "get in on things"; he wanted them to think together, unemotionally, objectively; he did not want them to

parrot other people's thinking; he wanted their thinking to be their own, although he did like them to know and to consider the best previous thinking on the subject. He, further, wanted his students' thinking to be concerned with vital matters: a thinking that would provide them with a better insight into current, pressing, meaningful problems; a thinking that would lead to action, in their lives, in their work, in their community.

His classes, as indicated, were enormous. At times a single class exceeded 650 students, and they filled both the main auditorium and the balcony of the Horace Mann auditorium. No one regretted the impossibility of knowing this large student body as much as Kilpatrick did, for one of his great joys was to know and to become friends with his students. Since he faced a situation not of his own making or liking, he devised the following method as best to gain what he sought.

Here is the way Kilpatrick described his method: "The difficulty here at Teachers College was that my classes grew very large, so that I could not do with them what I thought best.² To the larger classes [this did not apply to his small classes] I gave out questions which they could think about and then we would discuss these problems in class. I would first call on a poor student, then on a better student, and finally on the most able students."

After these preliminary explorations, he threw open the problem for general discussion. He passed no judgment on the answers. As he says, "I was developing and building up the answers gradually." But always he respected the answer of each student, no matter how poor, never criticizing; developing and elaborating each answer, and making even the poorer answers have a depth and a meaning and a breadth which often the student himself did not perceive.

Said Kilpatrick: "I would try to sum up the general discussion, as best I could, using as far as possible, what the students had said, trying to keep myself as much in the background as possible. I conceived my task as the one to help them to think, not the one to tell them what to think. I avoided that as much as possible. It was the merits of the case we were seeking. We looked for them wherever we could find them. If a student

² After noting how hard he finds discussing problems with large classes, he wrote in his diary (September 23, 1919): "I cannot get reconciled to not knowing my students. When the numbers increase beyond a certain amount I know not relatively, but actually, fewer of my students. I am determined to try to fix more of them in my memory. But I fear that the pressure of work will prevent. I'll get too busy." For years, he made elaborate seating charts, which he used in order to fix the names of his students, and now as a retired professor, in his Morningside Drive apartment, he has the bound volumes containing the records of all his classes, and he constantly refers to them, so as to fix and to place a student. For even to this day they are his pride and his boast.

made a poor showing, I brought out what he tried to say a little better than he had, and gave it a better showing before the class. But always I wanted to make each student feel that he had made a contribution; that he had given us something worth thinking about."

In his diary there are many references to his desire to be fair, not to push his students, not to take sides. I must not show my hand, he was constantly admonishing himself; I must follow their lead. He had confidence in the thinking of his students; he believed that once they saw all sides of a problem they would arrive at a better solution than in any other way.

Each question that came up meant as much learning for him as for his students; and he says that it is best when teachers and students work together for solutions to problems, for then the questions become real, and meaningful and vital. Otherwise, they are only stage-set devices. The greater the name he made for himself the more difficult it was for him to teach, for his students became diffident in answering, and they were timid about maintaining their position in the face of opposition.

From the first, he did not accept the notion of compartmentalized knowledge; teaching by such traditional divisions as history, sociology, philosophy, biology, psychology, and the like. The human being, in meeting his problems, uses all pertinent data. And in his courses Kilpatrick did use all pertinent data, bringing to bear the best thinking from all fields. "At first," he relates, "it was difficult to find proper references. I didn't know myself what references were apropos and what references were available. So I called on my students to help me. After I had worked out this difficulty, I would give out sheets with questions and with fairly specific references. I didn't expect everyone to read all the references, but I thought that the class as a whole would be familiar with all of them, and we would thus get a full and satisfying discussion. I found after a while that they needed to talk things over together before they came to class. So I began to organize discussion groups."

The students were required to meet in groups not larger than eight and not less than five. They were advised to choose members of varying interests. For each hour of class work they were required to meet for one hour of discussion. Each group was assigned a number. At first Kilpatrick called on students by name, irrespective of groups. When his classes became very large, numbering five hundred to six hundred, he discovered that some students were petrified at the thought of being called. "Even good students sat there not listening to what was going on, but thinking about what they would say if they were called on. That was defeating the very thing I wanted.

He then modified the arrangement. He had each discussion group determine which member would answer each question. To illustrate: if Group 17 was called on to answer Question 1, Miss A of that group would represent them; if Question 2, Mr. B would answer. This arrangement prevailed for all groups. It was understood that the group representatives would present the consensus of thinking. Each group would determine in advance who was to be responsible for the judgment of that group. "I insisted, however," said Kilpatrick, "that after they had given the judgment of the group, if an individual had a differing opinion, he was required to state that opinion. We wanted the whole question, with all its facets before us. Then I would write on the blackboard at the beginning of the class, the question and the groups who were to respond in answer, to wit, Question 1—Groups 7, 17, 27. Question 2—Groups 8, 18, 28, and so on. Then those who were going to report could get ready, and the rest could pay attention to what was going on; so that now we really had the attention of everyone. For the large groups I had to rely on this modified discussion method.

"I was always very particular that everybody paid attention. If anybody showed any disposition not to pay attention, he was likely to be called on next. I watched that all the time. I allowed nothing to interfere, so that everybody paid attention to what was going on. I didn't scold students, but if I called on anybody and he couldn't tell me what had just been said, it embarrassed him and all the rest of us understood it; so that we had little of that. And it was disturbing to us in large classes for anyone to come late. So I insisted that the students make their plans to get to class on time, and we managed to get along with little interference of that sort."

For the smaller classes he tried to introduce democratic planning and choosing. The class would work out some topic, dividing it into various divisions, and then committees of two or three would work on subdivisions of these problems. The students' findings and their discussions became the curriculum for the course. In all his teaching Kilpatrick avoided lecturing; he disapproved of lecturing, quoting Auden to the effect that "lecturing is like talking in somebody else's sleep." He wanted students to think problems through, not to memorize, not to report back what other thinkers had said, not to repeat what was in the text. He did want his students to be aware of what other thinkers thought about a certain subject, so as to take it properly into account; and since this involved a wide range of knowledges and fields of study—philosophy, biology, psychology, history, sociology, anecdotal and literary material—he could find no text to serve his purpose. He gathered such material himself;

had it mimeographed; and placed twenty or thirty copies in the library for his students. This material became the content in 1923 of his book, *Source Book in the Philosophy of Education*. The purpose of this mimeographed material was to present significant differences of opinion on current, vital problems. He made it a practice to omit any material merely because it had historical significance. He wanted his students to consider live important issues, and consider pertinent ideas in reference to such issues, and then form their own conclusions. "I have been criticized by some outworn philosophers because I didn't present their position," he says, "but I have told them that I didn't think they dealt with live issues and I wouldn't waste the time of my students with such things.

"My aim was to put as much individual responsibility for as much creative thinking on the part of my students as I possibly could. I didn't want them simply to accept what I thought. That is a good way to keep them from thinking." At first he met resistance. Students were accustomed to listening to professors lecture, take notes, and then pass an examination on these notes. "Every year, especially at the beginning, I had to work against that sort of thing."

In this connection Kilpatrick relates the following anecdote: In Mukden he met a Scottish missionary who, while on sabbatical leave, had attended the University of Edinburgh and there had taken an education course with Professor Godfrey Thompson. The Scotsman told how many of the students complained about the queer procedure of the course. "We took his course so that the professor could tell us what to think, not to hear other students talk. We didn't want to hear the students; we wanted to hear what the professor had to say."

There was a story behind this. Dr. Thompson had been an exchange professor at Teachers College the previous year, and Kilpatrick and Thompson had become fast friends. They took long walks together and discussed educational problems. Professor Thompson had visited Kilpatrick's classes and had watched the discussion method in action, and when he returned to Edinburgh he had adopted it; but the students, according to report, found it a strange method, indeed.

Another similar story is told by Professor Elliott of Union Theological Seminary, a former student who has done much to further discussion techniques in various ways. He tells of a Yale University conference, conducted on the same plan; an auditor said: "I've come one thousand miles to sit at the feet of these professors and they won't tell me what they think."

Kilpatrick's aim at all times was to make his students feel that they had thought through the problem themselves. "I would help them by

asking questions and suggesting readings, but I didn't tell them my answer to the question. I did my level best to keep students from knowing what my answer was. I wanted them to stand up on their own feet, make up their own minds, come to their own conclusions."

Let us try to visualize his class in action.

Here is the problem: "To what extent should the teacher use coercion as a method of instruction?" Kilpatrick calls on Groups 8, 14, 25, 36. One of the representatives rises to report that his group agrees that coercion produces undesirable, antisocial learnings; another group representative rises to say that his group agrees in a general way with the preceding statement, but that one of the members insists that under conditions prevailing in the schools it is impossible to teach without some measure of coercion, since otherwise children will do poorly in class work and in examinations.

The discussion is now thrown open for anyone to join. Students rise to give first hand evidence of the awful havoc of a fixed curriculum. They tell how this compels teachers to force children to do things they dislike: how the children come to hate school and everything connected with it.

Whereupon an elderly teacher rises to protest against all this nonsense and twaddle. In strong language she tells of how her daughter hated to practice the piano; how she compelled her to do so. And now, reports the student triumphantly, her daughter is an accomplished pianist. Another student rises to ask how else can a teacher develop perseverance and stick-to-itiveness unless he lays down the law?

The issue is now joined.

Kilpatrick, in the background up to this point, now comes forward and poses this question: "How many can relate other instances where compulsory learning accomplished its objective?"

Two out of a class of four hundred and fifty relate experiences where coercion appeared desirable.

Then a quiet settles over the large auditorium.

Kilpatrick now asks: "How many can provide instances where it did not succeed?"

Student after student relates lifelong and bitter hates against mathematics, foreign languages, music, milk, the Bible, swimming, school, teachers, etc., etc.

There ensues a heated discussion as both sides try to defend their position; students present scholarly findings, they make confessions, they relate experiences.

All sides have been heard.

Kilpatrick now steps forward again: "We'll see how the class stands on

this question: How many believe coercion has merit as a method of teaching?"

There is a show of hands—a sprinkle—the number is small in proportion.

"How many believe that it is a poor method."

There is an overwhelming show of hands.

Kilpatrick goes on to the next question; he does not attempt to argue or to persuade or to change opinions.

Fundamental in his teaching was this respect, this unique respect, for each personality, and for the thinking of each person. His main purpose was to have students "think together" about a common problem and this they had just done. Thus did he show his faith in the free, inquiring mind. If students thought and if they tried to view all sides of a question, they would more likely come to sound conclusions. It did not matter to him if the first solution was right or wrong or the second solution was right or wrong. If one followed the scientific method—posing the problem, getting all pertinent evidence bearing on it, coming to a conclusion, and then testing the conclusion—the student would recognize failure; and, like a scientist he would attempt a reexamination of the problem and then try another solution. Conclusions were always to be regarded as tentative. This is not a static and fixed universe; it is a dynamic universe, with change the only certainty. Hence, there was no finality of solution to any problem; it should always be subject to renewed inquiry and renewed thinking. The only way to determine whether reasoning was good and sound was in action.

As Dean Melby has said: "Kilpatrick's philosophy was self-repairing, ageless, and timeless."

Kilpatrick had faith in the method; and as a teacher he was seeking something larger than a right or a wrong answer.

Like Socrates, he went into the market place and posed fundamental questions; and, like Socrates, he conceived his role of teacher as the "midwife" of ideas. He had the genius to liberate thought, to release the individual. In his classes, he was gentle, kindly, patient, never ridiculing, never resorting to sarcasm, respectful of all ideas. Says Professor Keliher of New York University: "I'll never forget the sensation I felt when I, a young teacher, coming from an obscure school in Washington, D. C., rose in his large class and argued the position that the achievement of one goal and purpose led to further goals and purposes and how kindly Kilpatrick received this contribution."

It would be false to say that Kilpatrick won over all his students easily and readily. At first they could not believe that Kilpatrick wanted

them to think for themselves. They would try to fathom what Kilpatrick believed and then present it as their own thoughts. They had no faith in their own thinking; in all their schooling they had depended on and accepted authoritative knowledge. But before long they began to catch on. As the minds of the students joined in agreement, disagreement, and partial agreement; as their absolutes, traditions, customs, and folkways began to be analyzed objectively and unemotionally, but with great kindness and gentleness; as encrusted prejudices and biases began to be cut away and the fundamentals and the roots of a person's living began to be challenged, the course became engrossing and overpowering; the students became earnest and fervent and serious. Many of them never had thought so courageously, so honestly, so frankly; and the class discussions overflowed onto the campus and into the dormitories, and later into the schools and the colleges to which the students returned as teachers.

Professor Roma Gans of Teachers College relates the awe and the wonder she felt when, as his student, she joined a discussion group and began to exchange views on crucial problems. It was the first time she and the group had had to think independently and alone, not with a textbook as a guide but by their own living and their own experiences. Here they could not resort to authority, to traditions, to customs, to folkways, nor to Plato, nor to Aristotle, nor to the church, nor to anybody else. For here they were considering a unique problem, and here students were trying to come to grips with it, in an elemental, fresh way; they were truly adventuring into the unknown.

As students began to realize how important their thinking was, they gained increasing confidence in their own thinking. This had a tremendously liberating effect. For once students saw significance in what they were saying, they experienced a spiritual uplift and an intellectual renaissance and growth, almost akin to the sweep of roaring currents breaking through a dam. Professor Gans said simply: "Such a thing had never happened to me before."

This also accounts for the fact that Europeans and, especially, Oriental students flocked to Kilpatrick's classes. He had most to give them. In the Orient particularly did a rigid, static philosophy of life and education hold sway. For Oriental students, therefore, Kilpatrick's teachings had an especially strong appeal. He opened up for them a new and different world. Many of these Oriental students, when they returned to their own country, established progressive schools—in Iraq, Iran, India, China, Egypt. And to this day Kilpatrick's theories of education exert a greater influence in the Near and Far East than in Europe.

One of Kilpatrick's critics pointed out that, although he objected to

indoctrination, no teacher was so successful in indoctrinating students. I posed this thought to Kilpatrick and he said: "Tell me what proportion of my students precisely agree with me." But he did influence them vastly, not in particulars but in a methodology, in a democratic process of thinking together. His students, who had come to him from all over the world, eventually dispersed, and they spread his philosophy of living. Many students initiated his classroom methodology as teachers in elementary and high schools, in colleges and universities, in settlement houses; at panel discussions, at educational conferences, in workshops, in open forums of every sort. Although one cannot say that Kilpatrick was altogether responsible for the discussion technique, it is fair to say that no one used it with such genius, no one secured more adherents for this method, no one was more responsible for its spread throughout the country and the world.

It is interesting to see how Professor Elliott applied the discussion procedure at an International Y. M. C. A. conference at Helsinki. The approximately two thousand delegates were divided into small groups; each group comprised a cross section of the entire delegation, with a proportionate number of delegates from the various countries present—France, Italy, America, England, the Scandinavian countries. The entire convention posed pivotal problems for solution. The small groups then met and threshed out these problems, suggesting solutions and raising other problems. Later the entire convention reassembled, and the representatives of the various groups stated the attitudes and viewpoints of their conferees. At the general assemblage the delegates learned where they agreed and where they differed; also brought to their attention were new areas for consideration. The convention then again dissolved into small discussion groups to reconsider the areas of disagreement. Later the whole convention met again and heard new proposals and new recommendations. Thus the convention proceeded. There was constant alternation between the small groups and the assembled convention, until agreement or lack of agreement was definitely established. This process Kilpatrick called "group thinking," in contradistinction to "mass thinking," which he believed was often manipulated by convention "insiders" who came with prepared resolutions and prepared judgments to overwhelm the delegates.

Since 1917-1918 Kilpatrick has used the discussion method as here outlined. Only now are we beginning to realize the force and power that reside in small groups who come face to face with vital problems. All kinds of fancy names have been given to the process. A popular, current one is "group dynamics," but the fact that individuals, as they participate

in group thinking, undergo radical and fundamental changes has become clearer with the years. Since Kilpatrick's discussion groups dealt with attitudes, values, points of view, they were reaching the vitals of individuals; and this group discussion, this sense of active participation and contribution, produced permanent and lasting changes, as no textbook or informational course could. A Chinese proverb says:

If we only hear a thing
We soon forget it;
If we see it,
We remember it,
But if we actually do it ourselves
We know it.

During the war the government sought to induce housewives to use cheaper cuts of meat, such as brains, kidneys, tripe. Nutritionists lectured to the women of Cedar Rapids on the importance of such cooperation, as the army needed the other cuts. Several weeks later, investigation revealed, the women had reverted to their old habit of buying chops, steaks, and roasts. Nutritionists came to Cedar Rapids a second time. They did not "tell." They presented the situation and they let the housewives figure out for themselves what should be done under the circumstances. And the women, not queerly enough, came to the conclusion that they should buy the cheaper, more perishable cuts of meat. A second investigation revealed that the lesson had stuck; that the women were buying tripe, liver, and brains.

Opinions and attitudes are best developed in small groups, from face-to-face contact. A person who has biases, prejudices, who lives by tradition, folkways, and authoritarian dogma often needs these values and these ways of thinking to bolster his ego; he needs them to provide a rationalization and a philosophy for his values and his way of life; and he is loath to change. When confronted with a small group, trying earnestly to seek solutions to real problems, the individual is more apt to find a new orientation, to transfer his old emotionalized outlooks to new emotionalized outlooks. As Spinoza has said: "An emotion can neither be hindered nor moved save by a contrary emotion." Only when a group works out its own problem and comes to its own decisions does the best type of action result. When a decision is handed over ready-made, the individual is loath to give up his prejudices; he wants to argue. As one member of such a group said: "You certainly see things differently when you are looking for facts."³

³ Samuel Tenenbaum, *Why Men Hate*, pp. 342-347. New York: Beechhurst Press, 1947.

In group discussion Kilpatrick's students reshaped their values and remade their lives; for that reason he exercised such powerful influence on his students. He won over multitudes of students, but not as disciples who worshipfully listened to his words and then acted accordingly. If he did gain disciples, it was for a method, a way of doing things, which was self-corrective, which enthroned the individual, and which had as its essence a profound respect for differences.

Herbert Spencer said that arguing only confirmed one in one's original convictions. I spoke of this to Professor Berkson of the College of the City of New York, a former student of Kilpatrick's and a scholarly writer on the progressive philosophy of education. I asked him why students in Kilpatrick's classes underwent profound changes; why they did not emerge with their original prejudices confirmed and strengthened. In answering this question, Professor Berkson made a brilliant analysis of Kilpatrick as a teacher, and I set it down, more or less, as I remember it from our conversation.

Professor Berkson said that Kilpatrick had a genius for stimulating discussion. Kilpatrick could get one thousand to think as well and as effectively as a congenial group of three or four. His methodology was as old as Socrates, for Socrates too posed fundamental questions and he too sought the truth. But no one put this methodology into practice in quite the same way as Kilpatrick. To him, it was a matter of faith and it struck deep roots into the core of his being. It was closely tied up with his democratic beliefs, this respect for the opinions of everyone, no matter how lowly. This patience, this desire to know and understand the opinion of every person, came out of his own concept of what democracy implies—a consensus.

Furthermore, he had a remarkable ability to arrive at conclusions from this give-and-take, from diverging and differing thinking. In his classes he struck at the core of the individual, his thinking, his emotions, his whole self. Many persons—teachers and others—have discussed vital problems, but no one has done it so wisely and so well.

Agreement and consensus, which are inherent in democracy, were also a tenet of Dewey's but in his classes Dewey lectured in a remote and aloof way, and there was little or no interaction. Dewey was interested in education in a philosophical way, but it was Kilpatrick who applied these precepts. For Kilpatrick, group thinking was a deeply spiritual matter. What was remarkable about Kilpatrick was that in his classes the students became open minded, flexible, truly inquiring, humbly wanting to know where truth lay; they discarded prejudices. Normally, when one enters

a discussion, one takes a position for or against, and one emerges victor or loser. Many people argue to sustain a position; they have fixed and set ideas, and they use reason to confirm dogma and absolutes. In Kilpatrick's classes, said Professor Berkson, it was different. Because he himself exemplified this unprejudiced, free, inquiring mind, his students became infected with the same characteristics.

Kilpatrick had the amazing ability to make a profound concept crystal clear by parable or by a story. To illustrate: In one of his classes the question arose as to what one meant by growth. There was considerable discussion, and at the end there was lack of clarity. At this point Kilpatrick stepped forward and said that when he was a boy in White Plains he saw a tree planted. He represented the trunk with a single slender chalk line. Recently, he said, he returned to White Plains and he saw the same tree. He drew another tree, this time with a powerfully wide trunk. Was it the same tree? Again, a person says "I." He uses the same "I" for himself when he was a baby, when he was ten years old, when he was twenty, when he was thirty, when he was forty. Is this the same "tree"; is this the same "I"?

The period came to an end. There was hubbub and talk and excitement; the discussion overflowed to the campus and into the college dormitories, and probably continued after the students returned home. It was the students who carried on; Kilpatrick did not elucidate or refer again to the matter.

A student raised the question: "The teacher knows what is good for the child. Shouldn't the teacher then make the child do what is good for him?"

After a lengthy discussion Kilpatrick stepped in and said: "As a teacher you teach spelling in a certain fashion. You are sure it is the best method. The superintendent sends out a directive that he wants spelling taught in his way, and he insists that every teacher follow this method. Would you, as a teacher, subsequently have the same enthusiasm, the same feeling that you are doing good for children, the same feeling of being creative and worth while?"

A question arose as to what constitutes learning. Kilpatrick contributed this story: A child knows how to lace his shoes; he can go through the mechanics of lacing his shoes. Yet the child refuses to lace his shoes and every morning his mother has to lace them for him. Has that child learned to lace his shoes?

One had to be a student in Kilpatrick's classes to know how these

parables, these illustrations, and these anecdotes aroused his students and got them to discuss and talk with fervor and passion.

Because Kilpatrick was a master teacher, he came to the classroom as one dedicated, as to a sacred altar. No one worked harder or was more troubled when things did not go well, and often they didn't. After every class period he would analyze in his diary how the class went, what questions "took," what ones didn't (and these he ruthlessly discarded); and he set down suggestions for improvement. He would watch the registration figures of his classes like a hawk, keep careful record of whether they were going up or down. One day he walked into a class and saw a handful of students, a considerable decrease from his previous registration. Since it was the beginning of the second term, he assumed that they had dropped out of his course because they were displeased. That night he noted in his diary that he was "sore at heart." The next day he found not only the expected registration but many additions. It appeared that there was some misunderstanding; the room had been changed, and many students had gone astray.

It is interesting to record how unsparing this master teacher was in self-criticism. The following excerpts are taken from his diary:

In the night think over my lesson and decide that I cannot use it for lack of books. Get up at 6:45 instead of 7:15 to prepare a new lesson which I do to my satisfaction.

On the whole a good discussion, but some cannot reason with discrimination. I must, however, soon get down to earth or some of the practical-minded will get uneasy . . .⁴

Meet Ed. B. IX; fairly good. It comes increasingly clear that if I can have them attack a problem that is real to them, they take hold in an entirely different way from what they do with an assigned task of getting a lesson.⁵

Meet Ed. B. IX & VI. The former is as dry and spiritless as ever. They dry me up; I can have no enthusiasm with them. Topics that arouse good discussion in other sections are a drag with them. VI I like very much. We have a good discussion on Pestalozzi.⁶

I find that when I can give the class something approaching original work in which the individual plays a part, then I get a much better response than when I merely call for the class work. All in all I think I am learning better how to manage the class than before times.⁷

⁴ Diary, June 9, 1914.

⁵ Diary, March 7, 1910.

⁶ Diary, January 7, 1910.

⁷ Diary, February 23, 1910.

I am too dogmatic with my Ed. 105-4 class. I get into "scraps" and make mistakes.⁸

Have a poor discussion in Ed. 106 partly because the subject is difficult, partly because I had not prepared last night. I left the room feeling whipped almost . . . Then an incipient cold began to grow worse. I went home hardly caring whether I lived or died. The Dean had appointed me to go to Cincinnati, but in a fashion that disheartened me.⁹

Education 106 discussion. Something more satisfying than the last time. I held my own and had a fairly clear conception throughout the whole discussion. This is a difficult topic. I may be on the track of something good. I may not.¹⁰

Philosophy class goes so slowly as to be almost humiliating. The Foundations on the other hand is doing remarkable good thinking. The difference is in my treatment. I work twice as hard in Philosophy and it goes only half as well. I simply fell down in my judgment on how things should work . . .¹¹

I am becoming so pleased with my Philosophy classes that I am forced to become suspicious of myself. I do seem to be accomplishing several things. I am allowing them to think things through and I am getting good thinking from them. I do uphold my ideas, but I leave it fairly well to their own appreciation of its merits. And I allow them to choose their problems.¹²

Kilpatrick wanted his students to think deeply, to encompass all the facets of a problem. At the end of one semester he noted in his diary that he was probably a failure with the class. He said he learned nothing from the class, and he had to presume that if he learned nothing the class had learned nothing from him.

I asked him in what way the class fell down. He said that the class thought in a shallow fashion. I asked him to give me an example of "deeper," "more gripping" thinking. He illustrated with the following:

What makes an act moral? Superficially, one might say that doing or not doing certain accepted things; going against the code of morals, the customs, and the folklore of the community. That is superficial thinking. When one thinks more deeply about the problem one perceives that being moral means having an ideal of the good life, and that this ideal of the good life makes one work, sacrifice, wish, give of oneself so that this good life becomes possible for all people. When an individual is tempted to do something that will serve him or his friends rather than the wider

⁸ Diary, April 3, 1911.

⁹ Diary, January 11, 1915.

¹⁰ Diary, January 16, 1915.

¹¹ Diary, July 17, 1930.

¹² Diary, October 22, 1930.

good, the moral man will reject this course of action; instead, he will act in a way that counts him as one of this wider group; and will so act as will best serve this wider good.

Another illustration:

What is democracy? Superficially, one would say that democracy means that decisions are to be made by majority vote or that power is to be exercised by the majority. That is obvious and shallow thinking. Democracy implies a consensus, an agreement; and this implies much more than merely a process of voting; it cuts deeper. Since democracy implies consensus, it implies respect for the feeling, thinking, and the personality of each individual; there must be consent, all-round consent, and even in the necessary compulsions there must be a consensus. If democracy means a consensus, a regard for one another, a wishing for each individual to live well, freely and richly, there are inherent concomitant problems: our social arrangement with its vested interests; the whole problem of autocratic control of industry; the whole problem of coerced minority groups; the whole problem of the unfortunate, the dispossessed, the downtrodden; the whole problem of concentration of power, of the press, of the radio, of industrial might, of machine government, of the power of hereditary and acquired wealth.

This, Kilpatrick called deep thinking, good thinking, and when his classes thought well and deeply, no one enjoyed such thinking better than he did.

Asked if he would use the discussion method for other subjects, subjects with a settled content, such as physics and chemistry, he said that the method would have to be modified according to the situation; but he would always want students to "be in on things," to be engaged in what seemed to them meaningful and important activities.

When teachers hand out predigested information, whether from a textbook or by personal indoctrination, it flouts all the laws of learning, of democracy, of respect for personality. Such a process of predigested information "seems to depend on clever substitution of matured thought organization that makes for shrewd guesses as to what may be expected, following the examiners' known lines of interest, and to this end back examination questions are for such study essential. The most extreme form of evasion is cheating, which of course, obviates the necessity of learning well any of the prescribed subject matter. At the best the distraction may be slight for students of the pronouncedly intellectual type. At the worst the pupil is incited by hook or crook to 'beat the game,' to get

by' with a minimum of reorganization of the new subject matter into its manifold possible connections with the old."¹³

Kilpatrick used the following story to illustrate how bad this can become:

A friend had occasion to visit a chemistry laboratory and he asked one of the students at what problem he was working. The student said that he did not know, but that he was doing Experiment 14.

Inquiring further, he learned that the class worked from a manual in which each procedure was outlined. "Imagine teaching tennis by prescribing in advance of the game each stroke, order and all, the player should make during that game."¹⁴

In contradistinction to the foregoing, he told of Dr. John M. Nelson, professor of organic chemistry at Columbia University who offered these alternatives to his students in a premedical biochemistry course: they could work with a laboratory manual; or they could work on problems they themselves wanted to solve. Speaking of the group who had chosen to do original research, Kilpatrick said: "They became entirely different kinds of persons. The professor said that he had to shoo these students out of the laboratory. They worked afternoons and Saturdays; they wanted to stay in the laboratory all the time. 'We have to run them out,' said this professor. 'Right now I have two or three papers written by these undergraduate students which I plan to publish in a chemical journal. When these students get to medical school,' said this professor, 'they are so interested in biochemistry and spend so much time on the subject that the medical school people complain.'"

At one time Kilpatrick was asked to help evaluate the curriculum of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University. He discovered that anatomy, which was taught in the freshman year, was a stumbling block for the students. He asked the dean of the medical school whether the students actually learned this anatomy. They certainly did, he said, and if they didn't they were flunked out of medical school. Whereupon Kilpatrick asked the professor of surgery when the students actually made use of their anatomy. "During the third year," he said, "when they go to the bedside to examine patients for particular diseases."

Asked Kilpatrick: "Did the anatomy that the students learned as freshmen out of a book suffice in this bedside work?"

"No," said the surgery professor, "they have to learn it all over again." In fact, volunteered the professor, "When I began to do surgery, I dis-

¹³ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Subject Matter and the Educative Process," *Journal of Educational Method*, November, 1922.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

covered that my school preparation was totally inadequate and that I had to learn it while in practice."

"That was exactly what I suspected," said Kilpatrick, "and so I recommended that they stop that sort of teaching and that, as far as possible, they correlate the teaching to serve the actual needs of students, so that they could live the things they were learning. That holds just as true for medical students as it does for children in the school. They must live what they are learning; otherwise they don't really learn it."

In teacher-college training, the almost universal practice is to require formal courses first, and then later, generally in the senior year, students are required to participate in actual classroom practice. This divorce of theory and practice, Kilpatrick believes, makes the theoretical educational courses seem remote and unrealistic; and there always exists the great danger that even good theory will not function when the student begins to teach.

Kilpatrick believes that students from the beginning of their course should assist master teachers in actual classroom practice. The students should then meet in the afternoon with their teachers and college instructors to discuss the meaning of what they observed and what they did. The teacher-college curriculum should not be fixed in advance, but should arise out of the needs and the interests and the problems of the student teachers. Here is a child indifferent to what goes on in the classroom. Here is a child somewhat backward, who is not responding in a wholesome way. Here is another child with unique talents, who appears bored with what is set before him. Here is still another child who is unruly and non-cooperative and disturbing. How can we best manage these situations; how can we best meet these problems; what can be done? The felt needs of students as they arise from actually observing and trying to meet classroom problems—this should serve as a base for further study of both students and faculty. This should be the basis of a teacher-college curriculum. As the students gain insight into the learning process, they should be given increased responsibility in actual classroom management. Theory and practice should go together.

In the last two years of college, students and faculty together should seek in a more formal manner to systematize the knowledge they have acquired. But even during this period there should be no formal, fixed-in-advance curriculum. It should be based on the needs and the purposes of students. With actual experience as a base, the students will be able to perceive more realistically the value of the more formal courses, such as educational psychology, philosophy of education, mental hygiene,

methodology. Thus theory and practice, thinking and doing, will function from the start of young teachers' careers; and perhaps with such an education these teachers themselves will carry out such a methodology and such a philosophy of education—theory and practice, thinking and action—with their own children in their own classrooms.

CHAPTER XXIV

Beyond Teachers College

IN HIS own living, Kilpatrick has carried out his philosophy of "purposeful activity," of "thinking and action." He is a man of varied and ceaseless activities. At one time he was associated with eighteen organizations, many national in scope. His door is always open to any student, to any cause, to any movement, to any person who seeks his advice and counsel. If the cause seems worthy, if Kilpatrick thinks it might promote the "social good," he gives of himself unstintingly, in time, energy, influence.

What has been the nature of these activities? They can only be briefly sketched. A professor from another university came to him with a tale of academic persecution and he immediately formed a committee to see what could be done about it. A wealthy family wanted to endow an educational project and Kilpatrick joined with others to decide on how best to expend the funds. A faculty associate poured out his heart to him about the abuse he was taking from his superior and Kilpatrick used his influence to ameliorate his lot. When his beloved Dewey was seventy, he was chairman of the arrangements committee to honor him publicly on his birthday; in 1949, when Dewey was ninety, he served in the same capacity for the same purpose, and it is probable that no philosopher, living or dead, received such mighty and universal public recognition as did Dewey on this occasion. Orphanages, play schools, labor unions, camps, settlement houses, public schools, colleges and universities have sought him out for advice on educational policies, and he has journeyed to distant places to do as asked. He has participated in conferences concerning labor problems; conferred with Y.M.C.A. workers about desirable educational procedures; attacked the New York Lusk Laws, limiting the freedom of teachers, and the Newman Bill, requiring loyalty oaths of college students;¹ he was in the thick of the fight to

¹ Such a measure, he insists, would "stifle thought. Colleges exist to make students think better. To keep students out of College on the ground that they think badly is like keeping sick people out of the hospital, the very place they belong . . ."

persuade the government to allow shipment of arms to Ethiopia, when that unfortunate country was about to be attacked by Italy; he was among the first to see the threat of totalitarianism and among the first to try to arouse America to the menace of nazism and fascism. He was among the first to speak up against the Nazi persecution of the Jews; and he was a sponsor of the International Relief Association, of the American Committee for the Settlement of Jews in Birobidjan. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Camilla-Zack Country Life Center, a Georgia agency to foster better farming and living among Negroes. He joined with a group to demand that an existing vacancy for a college presidency be filled by an educator and not a politician. He was joined up with others to further the election of LaGuardia as mayor of New York City to wipe out a "century and a quarter of Tammany misrule." He was asked to serve on the advisory boards of *Parent Education*, of the *Educational Digest*, of the Bank Street School, of radio stations CBS and WEVD; he served as curriculum adviser to Adelphi and Goddard colleges; he served as chairman of the board of trustees of Bennington College; as honorary member of the Hindustan Association of America; as chairman of the executive board of the *Social Frontier*. A glimpse of Kilpatrick carrying on in these "purposeful activities" may be had in a letter to his mother, excerpts of which follow:

Tuesday evening I addressed a group of nutrition workers . . .

Thursday afternoon I met with a group to decide—ultimately—on what should be done with the Union Theological School of Religion, whether to continue it at all and if yes on what basis.

Friday evening I went down to Princeton to discuss principles of teaching with a group of students and instructors in economics. I dined in the great hall of the Graduate School, which is modeled after the dining hall at Christ Church, Oxford. We all wore gowns.

The next day I spoke twice before a group of Friends (Hicksite Quakers) in Philadelphia. So that during the week I had a variety of meetings. It is so almost every week. On Wednesday I leave for Minneapolis to make good the time lost by my January spell of gripe. I leave there Monday night, and get back here Wednesday morning.²

In another letter, he observes:

I can never get used to the idea that I should be invited so far and so urgently. . . . Those in charge of my coming say that as soon as it was announced that I was to come they got enough requests for me to speak in towns in Minnesota to Wisconsin to have taken a month to fill.³

² Letter to his mother, March 25, 1923.

³ Letter to his mother, April 1, 1923.

There is hardly a form of platform appearance which Kilpatrick did not make. He spoke before student bodies, parents' associations, at forums and panel discussions, over the radio, in mansions around ornate fireplaces, in living rooms of urban apartment houses,⁴ at educational conferences, and at commencement exercises. Once a former student invited him in May to address a group of teachers in West Virginia and Kilpatrick had to inform him that his earliest available date was October. On the platform, calm in manner, unemotional, speaking simply, using homely illustrations and parables, Kilpatrick was a powerful attraction. For a lecture he gave in Los Angeles, there were five thousand applications for the two thousand available seats. As a lecturer he earned as much as \$10,000 a year. His fee was \$1,000 for a week, and it was established for him in this fashion:

In Milwaukee he was engaged by a group of teachers to deliver a series of lectures lasting a week. The honorarium was set at \$500, plus expenses. The overflow at these lectures was so great that "I had to deliver my lecture twice and they gave me one thousand dollars. That, then, became my regular charge, one thousand dollars and all expenses. Going back and forth, I would add several lectures on the way; so I remember once making as much as thirteen hundred dollars a week."

Kilpatrick never could overcome his amazement at the number and the urgency of requests that kept pouring in for his appearance. There are few universities in the United States at which he has not been invited to speak. All told, he estimates that he has delivered about two thousand lectures. It frequently happened that a university would suspend all its classes, so that students could hear him. Five of his books were originally prepared as lectures before learned bodies: *Education for a Changing Civilization*, which comprised a series of lectures delivered for the Luther Laffin Kellogg Foundation at Rutgers University; *How We Learn*, which embodied a series of lectures delivered for teachers at Vellore, India; *Our Educational Task*, which comprised his Weil Lectures on American Citizenship, delivered at the University of North Carolina; *Education and the Social Crisis*, prepared for the Kappa Delta Pi lecture series; *Selfhood and Civilization*, which was prepared for the Macy Lectures, delivered at Teachers College.

In one respect he was adamant. He would not prostitute his position or lend his name to any publication that did not represent genuine

⁴ He abominated parlor lecturing; at times, he felt he had to accept such engagements because he might influence pivotal persons. For such engagements he set a rate inversely proportional to the size of the audience, namely, the smaller the audience the larger the fee.

thought and honest work. School textbooks are in certain instances nothing more than a polite academic racket; they are lucrative, and a successful textbook may mean for the sponsors royalties amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Colleagues and publishers were constantly besieging Kilpatrick to lend his name to a text, which would have been almost certain of a wide sale. Publishers' representatives would call on him and, in urging him to undertake a venture, they would hint that he need not spend much time on the work itself; that the publishers would be glad to provide him with the necessary expert assistants. This siren song won many professors. Kilpatrick spurned all such arrangements and he has never had his name attached to any hack textbook writing job.

He insisted that a professor had a unique responsibility, inasmuch as he represented expert opinion and the public was influenced by it. Any book that he wrote or endorsed should transmit his best thinking and his "most studied belief." Otherwise it is as bad as if a judge sold his decision for money or for "a minister to preach his doctrines for the sake of a salary."⁵ He admitted the temptation to write books that sell. "Some of my colleagues write books which would have little value if put forward for what they contained. I have sometimes feared that some even sell ideas they don't fully believe, because they are more easily sold."⁶

But Kilpatrick wanted to write—badly—and to make contributions to educational thought that would outlast him. In his early days at Teachers College he was chagrined and nettled by the fact that whatever reputation and esteem he had came to him as a teacher and that his colleagues regarded him merely as such. Writing came to him with great difficulty and hardship; he suffered over each sentence; and with the years the process has not become less painful. But he persisted at his writing; and each day until 1:00 P.M. he kept inviolate for study and writing.

In this respect he learned to place a great deal of reliance on a card index. As he read, he made it a practice to set down the meaty and pithy statements he encountered in his extensive reading. Many of the quotations he later used came from this source. Until the age of fifty, he felt that he was merely a popularizer of Dewey. Although unhappy with this role, he thought he was not sufficiently creative for anything else. This caused him inner hurt and mortification. He frequently noted his unhappiness in his diary, and these passages are typical:

As I size it up myself, I shall never add any really large point of view. If I keep my health and all goes well, I believe I shall by labor accumulate and

⁵ Letter to his mother, December 12, 1915.

⁶ Letter to his mother, September 28, 1919.

organize the field of transmission to others as it has not hitherto been organized. In so doing there will be a number of smaller parts that will be my own as will be the selection and organization. I shall, however, probably always be little more than the disciple and the expounder of Dewey's philosophy. Probably the most I shall do will be—as I have said—to systematize and organize it, coordinate the work of others, and in a few cases carry the whole on further. As a teacher then I shall be known, possibly also, as a writer of a few textbooks or commentaries.⁷

I am now finally a grown man past the probationary and introductory period. I wonder at the smallness of my achievement in the thought and publication line. I enjoy life and my work, but that I have so little to show is a humiliation to me. To many I am deemed a mere teacher—a good one to be sure but still a mere hander-on of the thoughts of others. This is, I admit, only too true. But I believe it is not quite a fair statement. In a way my success as a teacher so overwhelms my thinking contribution that I am misconceived. If I could get more into print, I would make a different impression. I am inclined right now to say that I have the opportunity. My discussion of method is becoming pretty well my own, and I have accumulated a good deal that others would like to read if I could say it well.⁸

His pessimism and forebodings were not warranted. Slowly, painfully, keeping everlastingly at the task, Kilpatrick developed a powerful style, pointed, trenchant, succinct. In his thinking, he was profoundly influenced by William James and John Dewey, but he neither imitated nor parroted them. They showed him the general direction and road, but once he began to traverse the field he stepped out in new paths and new bypaths. He saw new vistas and he explored new roads, so that with time his ideas became truly his own, unique and independent; and in the end his educational contributions were original, many, varied, profound, fundamental, and lasting.

Although, as indicated, the pen he wielded was painful and torture-some to him, it turned out—consistently and steadily—an enormous output of books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, book reviews, and every other kind and form of writing. The hesitant, "humiliated" author became the creator of what can be described as a one-man library. According to the latest count (his output continues strong; at this writing he has just completed his magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Education*), Kilpatrick has been the author of approximately fourteen books, three hundred seventy-five articles, thirty-five book reviews, twenty-one newspaper articles, thirty-three introductions to books, fifty-five pamphlets. In addition, he has contributed to sixty-three books; been a coauthor of

⁷ Diary, November 10, 1915, when he was forty-four years old.

⁸ Diary, November 20, 1917, when he was forty-six years old.

one book; editor and coauthor of three books; coeditor and coauthor of another book.

In the field of education, his books have enjoyed enormous popularity. They have been translated into Chinese, Russian, German, Japanese, Arabic, Portuguese, and Italian. Considering their limited audience, some of them have achieved enormous circulation. His *Foundations of Method* had a sale of over 61,000 copies; his *Education for a Changing Civilization*, about 25,000, and his *Source Book in the Philosophy of Education* about 25,000 copies [old edition] and the revised edition has already sold about 12,500 copies. Several of his books are classics in their fields. His influence as a writer unquestionably exceeds even his enormous influence as a teacher.

Kilpatrick's unjust treatment at Mercer University irritated him for many years and it still does. This did not in any way affect his love for and interest in the South. Once Professor Briggs, a colleague, on returning from a visit to Georgia, said to him: "If I had as many friends anywhere as you have in Georgia, I'd resign, go back home and run for governor." As his reputation in the North spread, Kilpatrick's fame in the South grew even greater. With time and change of administration, his alma mater began to think of him as one of its great and famous sons. On the Columbia University campus, Mercer alumni conferred with him and kept close to him; and for them Kilpatrick had a special fondness.

When he went south to address educational conferences, he was received with enthusiasm and affection. But that did not dilute his caustic criticism of many southern customs and mores, of fixed insular thinking, of intolerance of new ways and new ideas.

At an address before the Georgia Educational Association, he said:

"Without an easy flow of ideas we lose stimulation to thought. Originality must use what others know. Thinking needs the spur of contrast and attack. . . . The South does not do the thinking it should, partly because we are not a reading people, not a writing people, and because we are an intolerant people. We must get to the place of allowing wide differences in opinion in order to stimulate all to better thinking."⁹

With time Mercer University wanted to welcome Kilpatrick officially back within its fold. Its president, Dr. Weaver, had visited Kilpatrick in New York, and there he expressed his wish to award him an LL.D. degree. Kilpatrick hesitated about accepting; he feared the wisdom of

⁹ As reported in the *Macon Telegraph*, May 5, 1917.

such a move for Mercer, since it might incur the anger of its fundamentalist supporters. Kilpatrick, however, was urged to accept the honor from many sources and he at last became convinced that it would be "churlish to refuse." And in 1926 Mercer University conferred that degree upon him.

Sometime in 1923 Mrs. Hall Park McCullough came to Kilpatrick's office and said that New York State Commissioner of Education Graves had advised her to talk with him about founding a college for girls in Bennington. Her husband's family, it appears, had left a considerable sum of money and they were prepared to make substantial contributions for such a purpose.

If the proposed college was to be another traditional institution, Kilpatrick told her, he was not interested; but if the organizers were thinking of creating a new and different institution, he would be glad to help. Mrs. McCullough asked him exactly what he had in mind; to which Kilpatrick replied that it would take altogether too long to discuss such a matter during office hours. Whereupon Mrs. McCullough invited him to dinner the next evening. At her home he found, besides Mrs. McCullough, a group of prospective trustees, and to them he delineated his ideas. Apparently, the group were favorably impressed, for, from that point on until the founding of Bennington College, Kilpatrick continued to be its principal educational adviser and guide.

At a meeting held at the New York Colony Club to launch the venture, Kilpatrick outlined his concept of a philosophy of education that should motivate the institution. He declared that it should stress living and experience, not textbook mastery. It should seek to educate students to become creatively self-directing, independent persons. It should emphasize shared responsibility, after discussion by faculty and students. The daily life in the institution itself should serve to enrich and ennoble the lives of students.

He declared: "What we should wish, therefore, is education just as close as possible to life, as these girls see and understand life, with the idea that we may help them to see and understand life better, not life five or ten years from now but life next year, with the belief that if we can get them to grow next year and the next and the next, that is the best possible preparation for five and ten years from now." No subject, he said, was to be considered for its mental discipline, but it should be defended only to the extent that it fits in and helps the students with their present plans and purposes.

By 1926 the plans for the new college had advanced to a point where the Board of Trustees was seeking a new president. In this search Kil-

patrick could not initially help, since he was on a round-the-world tour. On his return he learned that the trustees had not found anyone suitable. Kilpatrick approached Professor Coss of Columbia University, who was responsible for many innovations in its undergraduate division. Professor Coss was not interested in the position; but he did recommend Dr. Robert Leigh, a former colleague at Columbia University, who as professor of social studies at Reed College had furthered many progressive educational procedures. Dr. Leigh had been a student under Kilpatrick, as had been his wife; in fact, they first met in his classes. And, says Kilpatrick, "she was a fine woman with good educational ideas and they both took on the work as a copartnership."

Bennington was born amid trying-circumstances. When everything was in readiness for the start, the financial crash of the thirties turned rich men into paupers. "Some of the donors who had made subscriptions were afraid they couldn't follow through," said Kilpatrick, "and we debated for a long time whether we had enough money to start or not." At one fateful meeting, it was agreed that if one man, who had promised \$100,000, would stick by his pledge they would start. Two prominent businessmen maintained that to go ahead under present conditions was foolhardy. At one of the meetings a straw vote was taken to determine the sentiment of the group; Kilpatrick presided. He related that those who favored the project chanced to be seated on the right side of the long table, while the two opposing businessmen were on the far end toward his left, and the man who had pledged the \$100,000 was seated on his left, between Kilpatrick and the businessmen. "I called on each person by name," said Kilpatrick, "starting from the right and going to the left. There had been only one 'no' when this man was reached. When he saw the practical unanimity of opinion, he hesitated, pondered for quite a while and then he said 'yes.'" Thus was Bennington College born.

Bennington College started with an endowment of one and a half to two million dollars. All this money was necessary for ground, buildings, and equipment. To determine student tuition, the salaries of the instructors were totaled, and this figure was divided by 250, the number of students the college planned to admit. "As I recollect," said Kilpatrick, "the tuition came to one thousand dollars and for board six hundred dollars. Such a cost would have restricted the student body to people of means. That would not do at all. We wanted capable girls who had no means. Hence, we decided to add a number of scholarships, and the granting of such scholarships has become an integral policy of the college."

There were no admission requirements other than the equivalent of a

high school education; the main consideration was whether a student could profit by the program of the college. "In the functioning of the college itself, we wanted to enlist the interest of the student and the faculty. There were no classroom recitations in the ordinary sense; there were no examinations; there were no sororities and there were virtually no extracurricular activities. For instance, music, art, drama, the dance were not considered extracurricular activities, but were major studies in the regular school program."

From the first, Bennington was successful in attracting students. The many progressive schools that had discarded traditional programs of study needed for their graduates a college which would be sympathetic to their aims. Three times as many applicants applied to Bennington as it could accept, with the result that Bennington started with a fine student body.

"The college did a good job," said Kilpatrick. "I remember particularly a woman member of the board of trustees, whose husband was a Harvard graduate and a prominent businessman. He was at first skeptical of Bennington's program; and his wife found it difficult to make the generous contribution she wanted. Her daughter was a student at the school and had profited greatly. A little before his death, she heard her husband say: 'Why can't we have a college that will do for the boys what Bennington is doing for the girls?' We had girls who were failures in other colleges; they couldn't manage there. Why, they blossomed out at Bennington. There was a girl whose father was a prominent businessman. If I told you his name, you would immediately recognize it. The girl had done poorly at every other school she attended. At Bennington, she gave herself wholeheartedly to the work, and it made another person of her."

"If they had no grades," I asked, "what check did the faculty have on students; how did they know whether or not the students were frittering away their time?"

Every student, said Kilpatrick, had a faculty adviser who followed her career and the main question was whether she was profiting by staying at Bennington, and whether her best interests were served by staying there. There was a folder in which were placed the instructor's estimates of each student's work; whether she was interested in her work, whether she was working conscientiously and intelligently at her tasks, whether she was making progress. At the end of the year, a committee reviewed each student's record with the foregoing in mind.

Emphasis was placed on student participation. In the classroom students and faculty, after discussion, would decide on problems to work out together, although the instructor would make suggestions. A student

committee canvassed student opinion as to the conduct and the value of the various courses; and if there were weighty complaints about a particular course, the committee would discuss the matter with the instructor. No drastic action was ever taken, but if the instructor did not seriously consider the complaints, his stock would fall in the college community. "The professors," said Kilpatrick, "were sensitive to this criticism and they tried to profit by it." The faculty did not hand out prescribed regulations; that too was a common enterprise—the result of student discussion and conference. "Many eyebrows were raised," related Kilpatrick, "when outsiders heard that the girls were making their own rules."

Asked if the girls did not abuse their privilege, Kilpatrick said: "Our girls made an investigation of other colleges, and they reported that in other colleges it was smart to evade the rules, but at Bennington it was smart to uphold the rules that they themselves made."

The rules, said Kilpatrick, covered the conventional needs. Take the matter of the time girls should be in their rooms at night. "They went into the whole problem; they thought it through. Sometimes we got troubled about that, but in the end we were convinced that intelligent self-discipline worked admirably. The girls behaved better and they had a better spirit all the way through."

An illustration of this was provided by a student who was walking with her mother on the Bennington campus. They came to a place where new turf had been laid. The daughter called to the mother: "Don't walk there." The mother said: "They don't want us to walk there?"

"*They!*" said the girl. "*We* don't want you to walk there."

During the long winter vacations,¹⁰ students were required to gain work experience, so as to make their theoretical studies more meaningful. A girl interested in labor problems was expected to find work in a factory; a journalism student in a newspaper office; a drama student with a theatrical enterprise; a student of social work with a social agency; a prospective dancer with a dance group; a government student with a government agency. The purpose was to combine theory and practice; and it was also thought that contact with practitioners in the field would deepen students' interests.

Kilpatrick was a member of the Bennington Board of Trustees for thirteen years and chairman of the board from 1931 to 1938; for him it was a gratifying experience. He had great pleasure meeting with students and faculty, and he particularly enjoyed conducting discussions with Benning-

¹⁰ Because of Bennington's cold winters, it was decided to shift from the conventional summer vacation.

ton students, at times in the classroom by invitation, more often on the campus informally.

He does not feel that Bennington was in all respects an ideal college. One would assume that, since he was a professor of education and prominent in creating the institution, he would watch things closely and try to manage affairs. Early President Leigh and he agreed that it would not be right or advisable for him to exercise control. "I kept my hands off almost entirely," he says. "I had no special discussion with Dr. Leigh except as any trustee might have."

Kilpatrick believes that some of the instructors hadn't "got over their subject-matter point of view," and he believes—and he points out that he is talking only as an onlooker—that he would have worked harder to find faculty members more eager to depart from the old ways of doing things.¹¹ Despite these minor criticisms, Dr. Leigh, he believes, did an excellent job, of translating "the original dream into an actuality."¹² Bennington "represented more nearly at the time what I believed a school should be than any other college," he says.

The president of Goddard College, Dr. Royce S. Pitkin, a former student, asked Kilpatrick to become a member of its board of directors. He told President Pitkin that he was already too heavily involved with board connections, but that he would be willing to act as an educational adviser.

Goddard College was a century-old institution, but it had deteriorated, and a new group was in control. Kilpatrick conducted several series of conferences with friends of the college and with faculty members. He urged that Goddard break down the barriers between college and community and that students learn to live good lives while working in this merged community. He urged that the college should aim to prepare students to live and to work in Vermont towns and villages; that Goddard should seek to make Vermont a better place in which to live for everybody—children, students, farmers, factory workers, professional workers.

¹¹ Kilpatrick believes that Sarah Lawrence College in certain respects has done a better job of translating theory into practice than even Bennington College. It appears that Marion Edward Coates, the first president of Sarah Lawrence, heard his Colony Club address, and was much impressed by it; she tried to adapt her practices accordingly. Students at Sarah Lawrence College participate in community and social services, and, says Kilpatrick, "when you get anybody to work at something he can do, that's a way of ameliorating personality problems." It is a source of great satisfaction to Kilpatrick to know that he has had a hand in the creation of Bennington and, though to a much smaller degree, Sarah Lawrence College, two outstandingly progressive educational institutions.

¹² Diary, August 5, 1941.

As guiding principles, Kilpatrick advocated the following:

Each student's course of study is to be planned to meet his individual needs, with the study of a vocation stressed as a part of living, rather than an end in itself.

It is hoped to break down any barrier that may exist between college and community and to use the community as a laboratory for the study of people as they grapple with the problems of living.

Students are to participate in determining policies and in the actual operation of the college plant.

The athletic program is to utilize the natural resources of the state with the aim to foster forms of recreation suitable for life after college.

The program will seek to develop adult education and recreation during regular college sessions and at special occasions in vacation periods.¹³

Asked to explain how Goddard implemented this program, Kilpatrick said: "Goddard students study the community for the purpose of improving the community." They established a little-theater movement in Plainfield, the site of the college, because they felt that it was a desirable activity that would enrich the state. They have become deeply interested in folk songs and folk dances, for that too enriches the life of the state.

Students publish a daily newspaper for the town, and, says President Pitkin, "students of wild life management go to the streams and ponds for their biology. Students of photography operate a studio on a semi-commercial basis. Students of the social studies tackle problems of their generation, and students of literature begin their studies with discussions of current motion pictures. Books are used for aid in solving problems meaningful to the students. Classroom lectures are almost unknown."¹⁴ During the summer holidays, students are expected to gain work experience in connection with their interests.

Goddard College today, says Kilpatrick, is a thoroughgoing progressive college, exemplifying some of the soundest concepts of good education.

On the occasion of the installation of Dr. Buell G. Gallagher as president of Talladega College, Kilpatrick spoke on what should be the objectives of a college, and what he said appears to me to be so wise that I cannot refrain from quoting a brief extract of this address;

Each graduate going into a school, for example, would think primarily of the opportunities that the school work had to offer for helping to raise the culture of the school and the school community. This would mean, for one thing, not less but greater use of books. The books, however, would be used

¹³ *New York Times*, March 16, 1938.

¹⁴ Royce S. Pitkin, "What Colleges Are Doing," *Vermont Alumnus*, Spring, 1940, p. 3.

not for their own sakes but rather as means to elevating life, and in this not so much the life of the pupil (directly and in itself) as the life of the community. But, be assured, any pupil who should in this way lose his own life in the service of father and mother and community would gain it back many fold. The best educational thought, as well as the best religion, so teaches us.

Any graduate who has caught the vision can find opportunity to work. Most obviously the minister can, but so also can the physician or merchant or housewife and mother. How these should work is hardly for me to say; circumstances differ too greatly.

Success along these lines will require prolonged and patient effort, a never-ending effort in fact—this is the way of education—but from success thus achieved we need not fear reactions. Really educative work is really done. Once accomplished, it serves as a basis for further achievement. . . .¹⁵

¹⁵ Address at the installation of President Buell G. Gallagher at Talladega College, April 4, 1934.

PART VI

Opposition

CHAPTER XXV

Opposition at Teachers College

AS KILPATRICK began more and more radically to deviate from the traditional concepts of education and as the full significance of the revolutionary implications in educational philosophy and methodology began to seep through to the outside world, and more intimately within the walls of Teachers College itself, there developed cleavages in educational thought. At first, these differences were subtle and polite, and as the lines became more clearly drawn, they became more marked, and, finally, they became open, stronger, and more uncompromising. Teachers College was a vital and active institution; here many first-rate men were working, and they sent out tentacles whose influence permeated practically every classroom and school building in the land. But, for the main part, the faculty was committed to a subject-matter approach to classroom teaching; but they wanted this subject matter taught better, more intelligently, more scientifically. In many fields, they were conducting fundamental studies. There was Professor Thorndike revolutionizing the whole psychology of education; there was Professor Suzzallo developing the new field of educational sociology; there was Professor Monroe making fundamental studies in the history of education. Specialists in subject matter were sending out students more expert in teaching such subject matter. In the field of supervision and administration, scores of surveys and investigations and researches were being carried out; all of which had a salubrious effect on a nation's school system whose practices hitherto had been essentially haphazard, with little science and with little concern for critical evaluation or systematic study or inquiry.

Yet most of this work was motivated by traditional orientation. These people wanted to improve and do better what the schools over the land were trying to do. There were, however, several outstanding members of the faculty who were attacking the status quo, who wanted a different kind of education, who wanted it animated by a fundamentally different

philosophy and methodology. In this connection, the following should be mentioned: John Dewey, who was providing the principal stimulus in thought and in philosophy; Frank McMurry, who was advocating a methodology that permitted children to be more intelligent participants in classroom activities; Miss Patty Hill, who had already begun the historic task of remaking the kindergarten; Kilpatrick, who was attracting large classes and administering effective body blows against the entrenched and traditional kind of education.

As already chronicled, Kilpatrick's rise to assistant and associate professorships was rapid and without untoward incident. However, his promotion to a full professorship was achieved only after travail and struggle. This final promotion hit two snags: one came from his immediate superior, Dean James Russell, and the other came from the powerful president of Columbia University himself, Nicholas Murray Butler. Since this story sheds light on the prevailing attitudes at Teachers College, it will be told in some detail.

Dean Russell was a remarkable executive and a powerful and stimulating force in education. His influence was for the good, and American education owes him a great debt. He inaugurated and encouraged many educational innovations. He was among the early educators who emphasized manual arts and other practical aspects of education; also, his vision built a great institution which laid wisely and well a solid foundation for a democratic system of education. As dean, he believed in the widest academic freedom; and in all the years that Kilpatrick taught at Teachers College, in all the many controversies in which he was engaged, Dean Russell never once placed any restrictions or any curbs—not even the slightest hint of any—on what Kilpatrick taught, said, or wrote. In respect to academic freedom, the same should be said about President Butler. When Kilpatrick became anathema to the professional patriotic societies and when super patriots launched vicious attacks against him, President Butler came to his defense and never, by hint or suggestion, did he seek to have Kilpatrick soften his public views or to make them more palatable to these elements. In blunt and strong language, Butler said that Kilpatrick had a right to the views he held and also a right to express them.

Yet when it came to his promotion to a full professorship, Butler was loath to grant the post to him and Dean Russell seemed to agree. Their opposition stemmed from different reasons. Dean Russell was concerned with the growing influence of the Dewey-McMurry-Kilpatrick school of thought. He was not sympathetic to that point of view, and he certainly did not want Teachers College dominated by it. His position, which he

put forth officially, was that he wanted all points of view to be presented at Teachers College. He believed that the strong influence Kilpatrick exercised over his students and over many members of the faculty precluded the wide diversity of thinking that he thought advisable or desirable. He had visited John Dewey's school in Chicago and he didn't like what he saw. He was convinced that the Dewey leadership in education represented an undesirable and baneful influence. He believed that Dewey had no social philosophy, and he thought that the logical outcome of Dewey's philosophy was unbridled individualism. The schools, he believed, should strongly stress discipline and social obligation.

Commenting on this, Kilpatrick said: "The more I have thought about Russell's views the more convinced I have become that he did not understand either Dewey's position or mine. I never did believe in individualism, strictly understood; true, I believed in stressing the individual; I believed that all institutions exist for the sake of the individual: but I never believed in an education that would turn an individual loose to disregard other individuals. I do believe that everybody has to work together and that necessarily creates moral obligations. I do believe that it is best for an individual to live in a society in which there is order, an established moral outlook and established laws; and only in that kind of a society can an individual live best. Contrarily, individualism stands for the belief that if the individual goes his own way, in the end all will come out for the best. I don't believe that and I have never believed that. And nothing that I have ever taught at Teachers College or said outside of the College ever led in that direction. The dean, however, never made this distinction; so he blamed Dewey and he blamed me."

The opposition of President Butler stemmed from other reasons. Butler had always felt a special proprietary interest in Teachers College, since he was its first president and always regarded himself as among the first educational theorists and thinkers. He had for years been a professor of the philosophy of education, and his book, *The Meaning of Education*, published in 1898, represented a progressive, forward-looking, and enlightened point of view. But with the years, said Kilpatrick, he was by-passed; he did not grow. Kilpatrick believed that this was due largely to his involvement with politics. From 1904 on, Butler was almost a perpetual presidential candidate, and when that hope became a vain one, he switched to an equally futile goal: becoming United States ambassador to Great Britain.

As John Dewey rose in prominence, Butler seemed to resent his displacement on the educational scene. It was hurt and chagrin that

prompted President Butler not only to be unsympathetic to Dewey's educational ideas but deliberately to misrepresent them. In describing progressive education, Butler once said that it was "the turning loose of youth in the world . . . to form such habits and tastes as they from time to time may choose." He became waspish and illogical when any defense of progressive education was made.¹

During the early period, when Kilpatrick's promotion to a full professorship was in question, Butler had not yet become so bitter and vindictive about progressive education; neither had he as yet widened his dislike of Dewey to Kilpatrick. He, however, was a fervent Hegelian; and this particular professorship in the philosophy of education—since he had once filled the chair and still felt a sort of proprietary interest in it—was of special moment to him. He was antipathetic to anyone's occupying this post who was not committed to Hegelianism.

It appears that when such an impasse occurs in academic circles, it is customary for the powers that be to make a quiet survey of the field for likely candidates and then invite the favored ones to the campus for further scrutiny and investigation. At least, that was done at Teachers College. One of the "white hopes" in this connection was a professor at Princeton University, and, in accordance with polite academic etiquette, he was in due course invited to give a series of lectures at Columbia University.

Kilpatrick attended these lectures and listened respectfully and attentively. In his diary he made careful comments on these lectures, some of which he thought were remarkably good and intellectually impressive.

Although not officially informed of the meaning of what was happening, Kilpatrick was disturbed and upset. He had received an offer to become either dean or vice-president of Peabody College. In this connection, he consulted with Professor Monroe, explaining to him that he preferred to remain at Teachers College "if I can get the proper treatment, but I have wondered . . ."; and he wrote: "I confess that the more I talk [regarding their opposition] the more dissatisfied I become with the dean and Butler."² Fortunately or unfortunately, the lectures of the

¹ Kilpatrick's attitude toward Butler can be gleaned from the following excerpt from his diary (December 12, 1925): "Read President Butler's annual report. It is difficult not to laugh at the superficial and cocksure way in which he discusses education and philosophy." Kilpatrick made this final estimate of Butler: "He was not a great man. He had no great mind, nor great heart. He has written no great book, nor advanced any idea that will live after him. On education he has a distinctly limited and inadequate view. One may surmise that after 1904 he became too much interested in politics."

² Diary, March 27, 1917.

invited professor were not consistently good, at least not good enough to challenge Kilpatrick in his position.

When the administration could not find anyone of adequate stature to replace Kilpatrick, he was promoted with some reluctance to a full professorship in 1918. "This marks," he wrote, "the height of my ambition so far as position goes. It now remains to make good with my study and thought."³

This did not mark, however, the end of differences over theory by faculty and administration. In this connection, it is difficult to classify into distinct categories those who opposed him and those who favored him. In the matter of ideas, there is overlapping; agreement on certain issues and disagreement on others. But by and large it can be said that he never won over to his position the dominating and influential administrative forces of Teachers College. In general, the strongest opposition came from specialists in subject-matter fields; these feared that their schools of knowledge would be obliterated as the logical outcome of Kilpatrick's education principles; also those in charge of educational supervision and administration perceived that Kilpatrick's concept of democracy and growth would force them to change the principles and methods they had been advocating; and also that his philosophy of education did not lend itself to simple, routine administration. The traditional school system was conducted on a line and staff basis. Under this arrangement, the superintendent and the supervisors had a clearly defined role; anyone in authority was the generalissimo or chief of staff of the category below him. To illustrate: the superintendent marked principals, as the principal of a school marked teachers, as teachers marked children. The superintendent decided on policy and curriculum; the principal visited classrooms and had the final say over methodology. He devised tests to check on the kind and quality of teaching, etc. The traditional system lent itself to such authoritarian management. Kilpatrick's philosophy of education made such administration impossible.

The scientific group also was critical. The educational psychologist, imitating the rigmarole and the apparatus of the pure scientists, conceived as their main task the devising of ways of making traditional school practices more efficient and scientific. They tended not to question the desirability of the conventional subject-matter approach. They accepted it. They merely sought to have the instruction administered in a more scientific manner. To achieve these objectives, they conducted many experiments on how best to teach spelling, geography, history, writing,

³ Diary, March 26, 1918.

and the like, and they devised numerous tests—many of a most ingenious kind—to discover the amount of retention and recall; tests to measure teachers' success in inculcating conventional subject matter, and children's success in retaining it.

So strong did these faculty cleavages of doctrine become that at times new members were warned at the outset to dissociate themselves, if they wanted advancement, from those favorable to Kilpatrick's school of thinking. In fact, certain members of the faculty carried on active campaigns in the classroom to break Kilpatrick's influence. One prominent member of the Teachers College faculty told me that when he was a student at the school, he lost the support and friendship of an important faculty member because he insisted on taking work with Kilpatrick.

In a move to counter what he termed "the Dewey-McMurry-Kilpatrick individualism," Dean Russell brought William Bagley to Teachers College. For his purposes, Dean Russell chose well, for Professor Bagley proved to be a formidable opponent and realized all the hopes that Dean Russell had placed in him.

It is interesting to recount the internal academic politics in connection with Bagley's invitation, for it sheds light, as nothing else can, on those nebulous and somewhat indefinable attitudes which permeated the institution in regard to Kilpatrick's position. Dean Russell had announced at a faculty meeting that he had "offered the chair of Normal School Work"⁴ to Bagley, saying that his "coming would fill a real need," and that he was an "able man."⁵ Miss Noonan, a faculty member, told Professor Kilpatrick that when she complained, Dean Russell said that "There was too much 'individualism' about the college and he hoped Bagley would help correct it. The dean then told her of his efforts to get discussed a certain point of view before the faculty. One after another had been invited and no one till Thorndike had really said the thing he wanted said; and that what was needed was for someone to get Dewey and Thorndike together. Whereupon Miss Noonan said she thought I [Kilpatrick] was doing this, which seemed to surprise the dean. Then he told of Professor X, and his hope that he would discuss the question but he had failed. At this Miss Noonan said that the students had recognized this and had said to each other that I should have treated the subject much better. At this the dean seemed even more surprised."⁶

A Ph.D. oral examination conducted for Ellsworth Collings provides, from another angle, an illuminating sidelight of these fundamental differences in viewpoint. The following is taken from Kilpatrick's diary:

⁴ Diary, April 30, 1917..

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Diary, May 1, 1917.

Attend Collings' examination for the doctorate. He does well, in fact in comparison with himself very well. But the crowd does not think so: (1) they do not for the most part have any grasp of his [Dewey's] position on the nature of the learning process (this includes all nearly. A and B and C discussed this); (2) they fear the upsetting of tradition (C, D, E here); they accordingly attack his presentation (C, D, E, F). A shows anew his inability to question and so does not understand Collings. I felt I never saw a set of grown men so catching at straws to save themselves from thinking along a new line: A, B and C each made such an exhibition of himself that I was sick at heart. E wanted to vote "no" straight out and so recorded his vote. E apparently so wished. C was gentlemanly as was B. In the end we decided to accept him on condition that he makes changes satisfactory to the Committee on Higher Degrees. I write this in detail because I wish it to be written down that the future may see whether I with Collings am right or my dissenting colleagues are right.⁷

Time has indeed vindicated Kilpatrick. Collings's thesis, *An Experiment with the Project Curriculum*, was later published by the Macmillan Company and it is still an authoritative and highly regarded book. A prominent Swiss educator visiting America told Kilpatrick that his first wish was to see Collings's school. In Russia, Shatsky told Kilpatrick how impressed he was with Collings's book and how it had helped him to re-organize his regional Russian schools. Few doctoral theses in education have stood up so well with time.

To the credit of Dean Russell, and to the greatness of the institution that he created, Teachers College faculty members were permitted the widest latitude and freedom; they could agree or disagree; they could follow divergent or new paths. This untrammelled freedom gave rise to a wide diversity of thinking and activity and, although at times this policy made for a kind of professorial civil war, it stirred both faculty and students—for students also took sides and entered the controversy—and it created an intellectual ferment, passionate and heated, which has been duplicated in few institutions of learning.

When Kilpatrick began to develop his project method, about 1915, he was eager to try it out; and the only school that presented itself was Horace Mann, at that time used by Teachers College as a practical laboratory. The Horace Mann School was conducted along good but formal lines. The children sat on screwed-down desks in straight rows as was the practice then in all schools, and other procedures were, more or less, likewise typical.

Kilpatrick proposed that one class be set aside as an experimental class,

⁷ Diary, November 20, 1922.

in the true meaning of that word. The screwed-down desks were replaced by movable tables and chairs. "With one child sitting at a desk by himself," explained Kilpatrick, "you could not have a program where children could confer, where they could work together, where they could move around: there can't really be an activity program, except of a very narrow, limited kind."

For this class he laid down one principle: He wanted children to engage in activity leading to further activity without badness. "I stuck in the word 'badness' to save discussion," he explained. "I proposed that the teachers should work with the children on the basis that what the children did today would lead them to do more and better things tomorrow and next week. I wanted the children to think up new things; I wanted the children to feel freer; I wanted them to learn new skills while working at these activities; and I was hoping that they might build interests while they worked.

"At first those in charge of the school were taken aback when I proposed that the class have absolutely no set curriculum; that the teacher was to be perfectly free to do what she thought wise; and that the children were to be free to think and to act. The children were not to be required to learn reading, to master prescribed arithmetic or spelling; there were to be no examinations. They were not to be marked or graded in terms of a prescribed curriculum. I laid down only one principle: 'activity leading to further activity without badness.'"

The teacher chosen for this experimental class was Miss MacVey (now Mrs. Meadow Croft) who later told Kilpatrick: "For eleven years I have wished for this day to come." Presently other teachers became so impressed with what was happening that they began to apply as much of the project method as they could in their more formal program.

"That this educational program was a success no teacher doubted," said Kilpatrick, "certainly no teacher who participated or knew of the work that went on in the classroom. I can't speak for the upper grade teachers; there may have been some among them who doubted it."

Asked what made him believe the new program was a success, Kilpatrick said: "When you went into the classroom, you could see the children working away at what they were doing with heart and soul; they were creatively active, attentive in what they were doing; and they had an intelligent insight and knowledge of what they were working at; and there wasn't any foolishness in the room, only hard work. There was less absence in the experimental classes than in the regular classes; and they learned the 3 R's with this program as well as children taught in the old way. The second grade teacher continued with this experimental

class; and that too was a success. Gradually we developed the program for all the elementary school classes. There were those, of course, who didn't like the new program; they didn't believe in this kind of teaching; they refused to be witness of what they saw. But the supervisors, the teachers, the children—all those who were directly involved with the work—believed in it and liked it."

Although committed to and practicing the highest kind of academic freedom, Dean Russell never did believe that it should extend to the management of the Horace Mann School. And, in truth, Dean Russell was not altogether happy about the new educational innovations. And yet it should be said to his credit that he did not interfere. When the Lincoln School was later established, he thought that that school was sufficient for experimental work and he sought to convert Horace Mann back again to a more formal school to show, as he put it, what had already been found to be good.

When Principal Henry C. Pearson resigned, Dean Russell appointed his successor to carry out this policy. "I myself believed," said Kilpatrick, "that his successor was chosen largely because he would put a mild damper on the new way of doing things. When you heard him talk, you would think he believed in this new kind of education; but when you listened more closely, you realized that he didn't. I heard him talk about the Horace Mann secondary school, but when he told of what they did and why, you saw that it was not a really new type of school."

For a period of eight to ten years, Kilpatrick said, the project method and its philosophy dominated the elementary division of Horace Mann School.

In 1916 Dr. Simon Flexner came to Teachers College and, speaking for the General Education Board, said he was interested in the establishment of a new experimental school. He himself, it seems, had once taught in a Louisville, Kentucky, school dominated by a classical curriculum, and he had come to believe that there was much room for improvement in both elementary and secondary education. Flexner had already won his fame in reorganizing the American medical schools; it was his program for reform that was responsible for making American medical schools the best in the world. Dean Russell called various faculty members to consider the proposal; and at this meeting, too, there was evidence of the strong clash in educational viewpoints.

Professor Thorndike interpreted experimentation in terms of measurement, devising tests to see which way of teaching a subject got better *measurable* results. Kilpatrick thought of experimentation in terms of a

better functioning, "better living" child. As he said: "The scientific view as then represented by Professor Thorndike was to analyze the educative process into atomistic parts, into separate distinct parts, and to experiment on each minute aspect. They took the old subject-matter point of view for granted. For instance, Professor David Eugene Smith was interested in whether it was best to teach subtraction by the old subtraction method or by addition. That's all right; I don't object to anyone carrying on such experiments: but it is such an insignificant part of the whole business." Kilpatrick urged the establishment of an entirely different kind of school; one that would experiment in a philosophy and a methodology that would best educate children "for the life they ought to live."

In the end, this point of view prevailed. With the money provided by the General Education Board for the grounds and building, the Lincoln School was born. As its first head, the directors chose Otis Caldwell, of the University of Chicago secondary school, who had pioneered in synthesizing the field of general science teaching in the high schools, thus breaking down the separating walls that had partitioned such subjects as chemistry, physics, biology.

Caldwell consulted Kilpatrick frequently about school problems. "It turned out," said Kilpatrick, "that the other people at the college were rather opposed to Caldwell, possibly because they were opposed to Flexner's school. I was almost the only one that showed any special interest in the Lincoln School and with whom Caldwell felt any special sympathy."

Although not altogether satisfied that the secondary division was as experimental as it might have been, Kilpatrick believed that the elementary division of the Lincoln School was as good as anything we knew about.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Attack on Progressive Education

IN THE early days the opposition to Kilpatrick's project method was mainly confined to Teachers College itself and to professional students of education. The broadening opposition that came from the public and the press and from religious groups developed only after progressive education had gained great strength and had made much headway; only after many communities and cities had radically remade their schools according to these newer ideas; only after the movement had gained considerable headway among practicing teachers and educators. The powerful opposition that became evident about 1938, approximately two decades after its promulgation, and is still continuing with undiminished vigor can be interpreted as a tribute to the movement's growth and to its progressive inroads on traditional education. What is remarkable is not that such bitter opposition exists but that it has taken so long to develop. The motivations of the opposing groups vary and they are as complex as the human being is complex.

The opposing forces range from those who feel that progressive education is a threat to their religious beliefs to those conservatives and reactionaries who fear the resulting changes when children are not indoctrinated but are taught to be critical minded and to subject all things to intellectual scrutiny; to those who have a vested interest in subject matter and who believe—and this sincerely and honestly—that this subject matter has made for them a good and rich life; to those who believe that the traditional system of education provides the best kind of training in terms of character and personality. I can only hope to consider some of the objections advanced against progressive education, certainly not all.

Teachers with vested interests in subject matter attacked the project method, or as it has been more recently called, "the activity program," by describing it as a "rabbit" kind of education, with children jumping hither and yon, nibbling here and there, and never mastering anything.

To which Kilpatrick countered that children and adults for the most part do not learn sequentially, certainly not by mastering the logically arranged conclusions of textbook writers and experts. Children and adults normally and naturally acquire a piece of information here and a piece of information there, and then with time they organize these and integrate them into a mosaic of living, thinking, and feeling.

"No one who knows much of history ever learned it . . . in one chronological sequence," Kilpatrick declared. "Instead a common way, at least among the better educated of the past, has been to learn, in one grand scramble, the ordinary day by day occurrences of childhood, some of mother's childhood experiences, some Biblical history, some United States history, some Roman history, some Greek history, some particular period in history . . ." In this way all things are learned, mixed up, but the individual rearranges and reclassifies these learnings for his own needs and purposes and these become more meaningful and purposeful as the individual gives them meaning and purpose. Such learnings he called "cumulative learnings," and they go on constantly, as the individual grows in insight, in wisdom, in abilities.

The individual must organize this raw material for himself; no one else can do it for him. To give the child ready adult formulas and predigested knowledge is like giving the child predigested food. Certainly this is "not good for growing people." Much of our present schoolwork resembles that of the floogie bird, which flies backwards and sees only where it has been. This going backwards is a senseless way of learning. "We prepare a highly organized course, the product of the adult mind, and thrust it upon the child's immature mind and expect him to profit by it because it is so logical and correct in every respect. All the matter is classified and subclassified. . . . The things we know that did us the most good were not learned in this way, but in spite of it."¹ The fact that one is exposed to someone else's logical arrangement does not mean that one will acquire a logical grasp of the subject or think logically in it. "The contrary is even probable."²

In this respect he differentiated between the *logical* and the *psychological*. Before an inventor or a creator achieves a final formula or synthesis, he spends years groping, thinking, trying out this and trying out the other thing. After much travail, after much wandering and deviation, he hits on the final solution. But what do educators do? They present the final formula, the final synthesis—in mathematics, in physics, in chemistry—with all the "scrap" eliminated, without any of the gropings

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Project Teaching," *General Science Quarterly*, January, 1917.

² *Ibid.*

and the wrong turns; and then they expect children to learn the end product, this "logical" arrangement. But learning proceeds best "psychologically," when the learner goes through the motions of the creator, and that means meandering and wandering.

In declaring that learning proceeds best with a felt need and a present problem, in insisting that compartmentalized, sequential knowledge is not typical of learning human beings, Kilpatrick cites the following: "Some older boys were making a castle of concrete. Was it art they were studying? Yes, the 'project' began with a broad-minded teacher of 'art.' But was it not also history and warfare? And was it not also chemistry or physics or whatever be the science or technology that tells us about making concrete? And was it not oral English, since the boys must explain on exhibition day all that they have done? And why not social-morals, since they had to learn how to compose their differences and stick to the job as one failure after another made increasing demands on moral strength. And was it not also a larger social-morals as they studied the significance of the castle in that long warfare when private greed had at length to yield to law and order? Under all these heads and more they learn. What then of subjects? Have they no place? That what is learned anywhere should ultimately be joined with its logical mate to form in time a criticized whole and so in time lead to separate subjects—this we must grant if individual taste and progress go indeed so far. Not all do. But, in the beginning, learning follows use rather than subject arrangement. It must be so. We must know this and teach accordingly."³

As Whitehead states it: "There is only one subject-matter for education and that is life in all its manifestations. Instead of this single unity, we offer children—Algebra, from which nothing follows; Geometry, from which nothing follows; Science, from which nothing follows; History, from which nothing follows; a couple of Languages, never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, Literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with philological notes and short analyses of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory. Can such a list be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of the living of it? The best that can be said of it is, that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and had not yet determined how to put it together."⁴

Another objection raised against progressive education was that by

³ W. H. Kilpatrick, *Education for a Changing Civilization* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), pp. 117-118.

⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1949), pp. 18-19. Originally published by The Macmillan Co.

enthroning the child—his wishes, his desires, by making the educational process pivot around him—it had created chaos in the classroom; it had encouraged undisciplined behavior by children. Mortimer Adler declared: “. . . it has mistaken license for liberty, for that is what freedom is unaccompanied by discipline.” In attacking this “soft pedagogy,” as it came to be called, Bagley said: “I can conceive of no set of assumptions which when made the sole basis of an educational program and carried out consistently, would more certainly intensify individualism and enthrone a glorified hedonism.”⁵ Professor H. H. Horne declared: “It is pointed out that some obligations are binding, that duties must be done, that right must be obeyed, that voluntary attention to the uninteresting but important is possible, that effort at times must be put forth, that discipline in doing the disagreeable that is necessary is worthwhile, so that efforts may lead to interest; that even if it never comes as a result of effort in such cases, still the obligatory must be done.”⁶

Later, as the opposition became more pronounced and as progressive education became a topic of public interest, the traditionalists began to make more violent charges. Among these, one that became more frequently heard was that this unbridled freedom was responsible for unruly, unmannerly behavior of children and even for their lawlessness and delinquency. Typical was the accusation made by Bagley that “soft pedagogy” and lax discipline contributed to “our appalling record of murder, assault, robbery, and other serious crimes.”

Of course, that last charge is nonsense. Anyone who knows the story of public education knows that school discipline, if anything, has improved, and that these charges arise only from the habit of human beings to glorify and idealize the past and from the habit of the older generation to wring their hands in despair over the antics of the newer generation. As Kilpatrick has had occasion to reiterate many times, in 1845 sixty-five whippings a day occurred in an average Boston school of four hundred children. In the year 1837 one hundred and fifty Massachusetts schools were closed because children ran the teachers out of their classes. A Georgia college president resigned in 1841 when he was forbidden to whip students above the sophomore year. One early educator declared that it was “impossible to have a college south of the Mason-Dixon line because the boys are too high spirited.”

There is a plethora of evidence to indicate that the traditional school,

⁵ “The Activity Movement,” National Society for the Study of Education, Thirty-third Yearbook, Pt. II, pp. 77-78.

⁶ Herman Harrell Horne, *The Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., rev. ed., 1927). Quoted in *Education Faces the Future*, by Berkson, p. 180.

if it did not actually create delinquents, certainly aided and abetted delinquent, rebellious, antagonistic, antisocial behavior. Since the traditional school placed its main emphasis on subject matter, at least one child out of four⁷ was retarded. Anyone who has even an elementary knowledge of mental hygiene knows what such frustration and failure does to an individual, especially to a child; how it warps and sours the child; how it blights its wholesome growth and development. As this matter has been discussed at some length elsewhere in this book, it would be repetitious to cite further evidence in this regard, although there are available an overwhelming number of authoritative studies—none of which has been controverted—to substantiate the fact that traditional school practices were responsible for the gravest and most serious personality maladjustments of a considerable proportion of the school population.

The critics of Kilpatrick never did seem to understand the high correlation between interest and effort. They seemed to think that effort was a trait apart and could be developed apart from interest, as a single muscle by exercise in a gymnasium. What the modern school is trying to bring about, said Kilpatrick, is not that children should refrain from doing what they dislike, "but they should like what they do." Again, he pointed out: "Some traditionalists inveigh much against letting children learn to follow whims. But it is their practice of leaving decisions to the whims of teachers that most develops whims in children. To learn to act on thinking is the exact opposite of acting on whims."

⁷ These figures, it is to be understood, are approximations. As the traditional school began to adopt progressive educational thinking, the amount of failure and retardation decreased. Because of the local autonomy of school systems, one cannot make general statements. In certain communities, progressive education was adopted in toto, and for those communities there was almost no child failure. In other areas, holding steadfast to older practices, school authorities continued to fail, to leave back, and to sour and make bitter at least from 20 to 30 per cent of the school population.

A study made by me of approximately 650 elementary school children in New York City indicated that at least 20 per cent of the children were maladjusted and unhappy in school and that as many as 40 per cent were not enjoying their school experience. For example, 22.2 per cent said quite frankly that they disliked school; 21 per cent said that they were sad at the thought of going to school; 22.9 per cent would rather work than go to school even if they didn't need the money; 28.4 per cent hoped that their employers would be altogether unlike their teachers; 40.4 per cent would prefer to have school different from the way it was; and 43.9 per cent would like the place where they work altogether different from school.—Pages 77-78, Samuel Tenenbaum, *Attitudes and School Status* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1939). Also the writer's "A Test to Measure a Child's Attitude Toward School, Teachers and Classmates," *Educational Administration and Supervision*, March, 1940, and "Uncontrolled Expression of Children's Attitudes Toward School," *Elementary School Journal*, May, 1940. •

Kilpatrick, as we have noted, wanted children to be self-directing; he wanted discipline to emerge from intelligent insight into the needs of a situation, not to come authoritatively and by fiat, not from rules and regulations which children did not perceive the need for and in which they had no participation. If democracy is to flourish and function well, children must learn how to assume responsibility; how to decide wisely and well; how to cooperate and make decisions and effectuate decisions. Authoritarian discipline is the worst kind of discipline and the most horrible kind of preparation for democratic citizenship. "The very essential of personality is choice—the exercise of choice from within as opposed to domination from without."⁸ If we wish to build up the person's capacity and intelligence for making wise choices, it is essential that we encourage "the free play of intelligence—especially within the group—in order best to find out the right course."⁹

To assume that Kilpatrick condoned or acquiesced in unruly, undisciplined behavior in children is to misunderstand him completely. He wanted discipline and order and respect in the classroom; but he wanted it on a higher level—on the highest level compatible with human insight and understanding. He had, however, only contempt for discipline that came from fear, punishment, or authoritarian regulation. This was not real discipline, only conformity; this was not a fit method for educating youth in a democracy. Certainly the discipline that Kilpatrick urged was more difficult and exacting on all concerned than the low-level, tawdry discipline practiced by the old-fashioned parent and schoolmaster, with a birch in their hands.

As for effort, perseverance, and hard work on the part of the child, no one sought these traits more eagerly, no one held them up to a higher ideal, no one regarded them more as a *sine qua non* of a wholesome personality than did Kilpatrick. But as for the method of attaining those traits, no one differed more radically with traditional educators than did Kilpatrick. The former regarded such traits as the outcome of disparate development, apart from the individual's emotions, feelings, interests, attitudes. They associated character and discipline with hard, disagreeable, unrelenting tasks. No, said Kilpatrick, the best way to develop effort—and also habits of hard, persevering work—was by encouraging deep-seated, engrossing interests. Effort is closely allied with interests; the individual possessed of a stirring, powerful interest will persevere and work and achieve with a fervor and an energy that makes the effort involved in

⁸ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Education and the Values of the Democratic Way," *Madison Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 4, December, 1941.

⁹ *Ibid.*

any extrinsic classroom assignment seem puerile and silly. The evidence in this respect too is overwhelming. Several illustrations will be cited to make this concept clear but anyone with a knowledge of human behavior has had occasion to note how powerful are the drives in an individual when stirred by a deep-seated interest.

A boy, Dwight Taylor by name, began picking up shells near his home in Nantucket. As his collection grew, so did his interest. By 1945, professional scientists had identified about forty-six different species of Mollusca on this island and in adjoining waters. Before he was through, young Taylor had identified one hundred and twenty species, and he had acquired enough knowledge about Mollusca to write a scientific treatise, with the title, *A Malacological Survey of Nantucket Island, Massachusetts*. At seventeen, Taylor won first prize in a nation-wide high school competition in science conducted by the Westinghouse Electric Company.¹⁰

Another boy, James R. Rand, III, appeared so stupid that he was flunked out of two private schools, and the headmaster of one of them told Rand's parents that their son was so hopeless scholastically that it would be a miracle if he could successfully complete his high school course; beyond that all hope was vain. In despair the father placed the thirteen-year-old boy with a friend, Dr. Orville J. Cunningham, the head of a sanitarium in Kansas City.

There, for the first time, he found a world which really interested him. The technician let him do urine analyses, and then gave him more complicated chemical jobs. When Dr. Cunningham entered the lab one day he found the thirteen-year-old boy making a blood count, a task which is usually handled only by M.D.'s or other highly trained persons.

But the doctor wisely let Jimmy have his head, and during the summer he underwent a transformation. He not only proved to other people that he was bright, but, more important, proved it to himself. "Up until that time," he told me, "I rather suspected that I actually was a moron, because everybody else considered me one."¹¹

Encouraged by his progress, his father enrolled him in a military academy. Back at school the boy's rebelliousness returned, and he ran away. Fortunately, he did not "run away" from his interest in science and experimentation, and in one way or another managed to work away at his interest. Now an adult, he is one of the highly regarded practical scientists. Among his inventions, which include the Remington-Rand electric

¹⁰ "Top of the Crop," *Time*, March 21, 1949, p. 49.

¹¹ Clarence Woodbury, "They Called Him Dumb," *American Magazine*, March, 1950.

razor, "is a new type washing machine which was adjudged the most valuable American patent of 1949 . . . Another is a fabric ten times warmer than wool . . . A third is a valve which manages to eliminate dripping faucets. Still other products of his busy brain range all the way from synthetic diamonds and an unwetting diaper to an air mattress which massages the bodies of sick people and thus keeps them from getting bedsores."¹²

Steve Smith was given a small telescope at the age of ten. He became so interested in the use of it, especially in connection with astronomical observations, that at sixteen he wrote in his diary with wonder and awe: "I have the universe at my fingertips."

What Steve actually had was a homemade planetarium which he built after having seen New York City's Hayden Planetarium, which cost more than two hundred thousand dollars. Steve's cardboard counterpart was put together of electrical tape, wires, homemade switches, assorted light bulbs, batteries and some odd parts. It cost Steve about ten dollars.

. . . In the evening friends come to the attic and Steve puts on a show. Soft music plays on a phonograph as the ceiling grows dark and the stars come out. As they become brighter and travel across the sky, Steve talks about their names and legends. Then the sky brightens, dawn breaks and as the sun rises over the silhouetted housetop, Steve ends the performance with a cheery, "Good Morning."¹³

Here is a boy whose career started when George M. Cohan, the beloved actor, gave him a gift of one of his records. The occasion came about this way: Joe Franklin, a reporter for his high school paper [Benjamin Franklin High School, New York City], saw Cohan feeding pigeons in Central Park and went up to him to ask for an interview. In the course of the interview, young Franklin asked Cohan whether he ever made any records; the actor said he did, but that they were so bad that he would like to forget the experience. Franklin wanted to know where he might find the records. Cohan said he did not know, but he hazarded the guess that the best source was probably a junk pile or a secondhand store. Cohan invited the boy to his home, and there dug up one of his records. Cohan had made seven recordings in all, Franklin learned, so he started looking for the other six. "While hunting I found a Jolson record, and I wanted to get all of his old ones too. I found that Jolson had made thousands. Then I knew my work was cut out for me."¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Homemade Planetarium: Sixteen-Year-Old Massachusetts Astronomer Builds Himself One for \$10," *Life*, February 23, 1948.

¹⁴ Mildred Faulk, "He Grows Rich on Nostalgia," *New York Sun*, November 22, 1948.

From then on, all his spare money went for the purchase of old records, and he carted away thousands from cellars and bins, and the dealers were as delighted to get rid of the trash as he was delighted to bring it home. One would think there was little promise of growth in an interest like that. But it did not prove so in Joe Franklin's case. When interviewed by Mildred Faulk of the *New York Sun*, he was a young man of twenty-two with a collection of about twenty-five thousand records, probably the best collection of popular songs between 1895 to 1933. While gathering his collection, he had become a walking encyclopedia of the songs of the period, their authors, titles, publishers. This unique and expert knowledge netted him from six hundred to a thousand dollars a week. He broadcast a daily program over a New York station called "Antique Record Shop" and he was the producer of another program called "Echoes of the Big Times." He served or was serving as technical consultant for musical comedies, films, radio programs, and Broadway plays. He helped out on the film, *The Jolson Story* and also on the sequel, *Jolson Sings Again*.¹⁵

The Bronx High School of Science opened several project rooms, where students were permitted to work during their free time. The students became so engrossed and stayed so late after school hours that the problem was how to shoo them out. A reporter for the *New York Times* interviewed Dr. Morris Meister, a former student of Kilpatrick's and the principal of the school. A portion of the reporter's account follows:¹⁶

A group of students, Dr. Meister said, worked three terms making a microscope, which in many respects is considered superior to many professionally manufactured microscopes. A "protozoa squad" raises animals for school experiments.

"A great many students," Dr. Meister added, "are conducting cancer research on plants and animals. . . . At present, one student is trying to ascertain which plant spray is most effective against plant cancer; another is studying different manifestations of laboratory-produced plant tumors."

Perhaps one of the most important achievements of a student, Dr. Meister said, was the "discovery" by Harvey Dickler, of a "white-eyed blowfly mutation."

One student built an "Eniac" machine that electronically adds, subtracts and multiplies. Other students transformed a battered Army tank transmitter into the school's radio station.

Can assignments of so many pages a day from a book or routine chores or tasks ever produce the self-propulsion, the energetic effort, the hard, persevering stick-to-itiveness, the discipline in character comparable to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "School's Trouble Is 'Eager Beavers,'" *New York Times*, February 10, 1949.

such deep-seated, stirring interests; can they ever remake and refashion the individual; can they offer him the same possibilities for growth, for learning, for broadening and enriching his experience and his way of life and living?

As progressive education took stronger hold, a number of laymen and clerics accused it of being materialistic and godless. The dean of the Education Department of an important university, said: "The term 'experience' is taken to include only that which can be measured. We can only 'experience' the physical, material reality. Therefore any idea of the immaterial, the supernatural and the truly spiritual have their existence only in superstition. This is clearly godless."¹⁷

Describing Columbia University as "possibly the greatest menace the nation has in its influence in American education."¹⁸ a cleric later elaborated this attack by declaring that Dewey's theory of education "ignores God, the supernatural, religion, the Ten Commandments, the eternal moral law, the soul, immortality, everything, in fact, which is above and beyond the purely empirical realm of existence."¹⁹

As Kilpatrick conceived education, it stood for no indoctrination whatsoever; it sought free, untrammelled, inquiring thinking; and it was by direction and philosophy moral, ethical, seeking to strengthen all that was good and fine in a "social man." To the extent that this education did not accept absolutes, nor a closed, indoctrinated system of thought and to the extent that it welcomed adventuresome thinking wherever it might lead, followers of certain denominations might have reason for concern. If, however, they had faith that a free-inquiring mind would, after examining all the facts, come to the conclusions they sought, there was no incompatibility between such denominational beliefs and progressive education. If they had no faith in free inquiry, if they felt that free inquiry would lead away from the absolutes they cherished, in that case they might be justified in regarding this movement with suspicion. It should be said, however, that many loyal observers of the same faith of the critics cited above are ardent proponents of progressive education.

¹⁷ *Education*, October, 1939, quoted in an editorial.

¹⁸ Reported in *St. Louis Star-Times*, October 27, 1939.

¹⁹ In a lecture before the National Catholic Alumni Federation, reported in the *New York Times*, October 27, 1939.

CHAPTER XXVII

Culture and the Essentialists

STILL another group came out in opposition to progressive education, and this group comprised professional educators, many of great prominence. The leading protagonist of this movement was Professor Bagley. At the meeting of the American Association of School Administrators, held in Atlantic City in 1938, the group took a strong stand against progressive education. This group came to be called "Essentialists."

The Essentialists charged that "tests show that the average child in the elementary school does not measure up scholastically to his European contemporary. Our high school students cannot read effectively, nor are they proficient in simple arithmetic and English grammar."¹ Furthermore, ours was the only nation "in which the expansion of universal school education has not been paralleled by a significant decrease in the ratio of serious crime."²

They placed the blame for this situation on the "activity movement," which disparages "exact and exacting studies; and the pernicious movement to indoctrinate immature learners in the interests of a specific social order."

Dr. Michael Demiashkevich, of Peabody College, speaking for this group, declared: "The progressives have tuned the American education system to the ability of the lowest class of morons."

Although the Essentialists were bitter in their attacks on Professors Kilpatrick and George S. Counts, they strangely absolved Dewey from blame; in fact, they seemed to want to get under his shelter. They maintained that the Progressives had perverted the teachings of Dewey and quoted several passages from Dewey's writings which seemed critical in a number of instances of progressive school methodology.

Professor Mortimer Adler of Chicago University, who had attained

¹ Eunice F. Barnard wrote a full and vivid account of this meeting for the *New York Times*, March 2, 1938, and the quotations come from this report.

² *Ibid.*

much publicity with his advocacy of an education founded on the classics, in an attack on progressive education, termed the movement "an unsavory mess," "a racket"; he charged that the biggest racketeers are the professors of education at Teachers College. "Progressive education is throwing the curriculum out of the school and putting in extra-curricular activities in its stead. It is supplementing the curriculum of the school with claptrap."³

Dewey quickly dissociated himself from the Essentialist movement with the following statement:

My criticism of certain schools that call themselves Progressive is not criticism of Progressive education. I have merely pointed out some of the problems which it has to meet and which has been accentuated because of the failure of the type of education which this new Essentialist group seems to represent. The traditional school never succeeded in giving more than a small number of pupils either discipline or any command of organized subject matter.

The statement of the Essentialist group is so general that there is no way of telling what they regard as essentials. . . . The movement is apparently an imitation of the fundamentalist movement, and may perhaps draw support from that quarter as well as from reactionaries in politics and economics.⁴

Professor Kilpatrick commented as follows: "The Essentialists represent the same sort of reactionary trend that always springs up when a doctrine is gaining headway in the country. The astonishing thing is not the fact of the reaction but that it is so small and on the whole comes from such inconspicuous people."⁵

The meeting at Atlantic City only brought to the fore long pent-up feelings; it was only a dramatic publicizing of charges that traditionalists had been making in more polite language in the educational journals and in lay periodicals. In order to bring the situation into sharper and clearer focus, it is necessary to elaborate somewhat on the traditionalists' position. In this regard, since Bagley was the most vocal of the group, he will be quoted at some length.

Bagley did absolve progressive education from connoting necessarily radical political or social changes. ". . . I have known several economic royalists who are ardent supporters of Progressive Education, in fact, almost all of the radical Progressive schools are private schools supported by people of wealth, most of them, it is safe to say, are very far from

³ *Education*, October, 1939, quoted in an editorial.

⁴ Quoted by Eunice F. Barnard in an account of the Atlantic City proceedings, *New York Times*, March 2, 1938.

⁵ *Ibid.*

being economic liberals.”⁶ Neither was progressive education necessarily irreligious. “Bronson Alcott is very emphatically a God-fearing man, as were such Progressives of their day as Edward A. Sheldon and Francis W. Parker. On the other hand, among the most notable of the present-day critics of Progressivism are certain leaders in educational theory who have been trained in the natural sciences and some of them do not accept religious dogmas. . . . To identify Progressive Education with either economic radicalism or religious skepticism is unfortunate because it beclouds the basic issues, arouses irrelevant prejudices and obstructs clear thinking on a very important problem.”⁷

He did find fault with progressive education because, he said, it weakened character by making learning too pleasant, and because it negated “one of the most important human characteristics: the ability, namely, to work systematically and persistently in the face of immediate desire, interest or impulse. It is this capacity that has enabled mankind to climb upward from the plane of the savage and the brute. . . . I would maintain, furthermore, that the higher-order interests are attained in no other way than through an initial period of struggle—of effort to do initially uninteresting and sometimes distasteful things.”⁸

In Europe, the schools emphasized duty, discipline, social and moral stamina. There the standards of scholarship and learning have been retained, while here in America the standards have fallen. The accumulated culture, knowledge, skills, ideals of the past represented, he thought, a priceless heritage, and it was the duty of the school, he insisted, to transmit this rich social heritage, this treasure chest of wisdom. “It is interesting to note,” Bagley warned, “that theories similar to those of Progressive education came to dominate Athenian education in the prosperous age of Pericles, and in the opinion of Aristophanes were a significant factor in the decadence of Greek civilization.”⁹

⁶ William C. Bagley, “Progressivism in Educational Theory and Practice,” *Better Schools*, June, 1939.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ In statement to Eunice F. Barnard, *New York Times*, February 27, 1938.

⁹ *Ibid.* Although they were the two prime protagonists in the clash of educational ideas, Kilpatrick and Bagley were most proper in their personal relations; in fact, Bagley would frequently seek out Kilpatrick after meetings, and they would converse cordially and in a friendly manner. In his classroom, Bagley would frequently attack Kilpatrick by name, and his theories; and Bagley was irritated that Kilpatrick in his classes never reciprocated.

When Kilpatrick read in the *New York Times* of Bagley's death, he set down the following: “. . . He has long been a hurtful reactionary, the most respectable vocal of all. Curiously enough, his most enlightening explanation of his opposition was that he could not understand Dewey's identification of interest and effort. When I pressed him closely in our Discussion Group, even Will Russell [Dean of Teachers

Professor Charles H. Judd of the University of Chicago, another formidable opponent of progressive education, stated the case as follows: "Children start life far beyond the race. It requires strenuous effort to raise one's self in one's lifetime to the level to which the race has attained only after centuries of struggle. The race has deposited its experience in compact, systematic subjects, where the results of age-long effort are available to children, who without these results would be lost in a maze of unclassified and incomprehensible complexities.

"... The trouble seems to be that Progressives expect children to jump into possession of all that is noble without paying the price of well-planned, systematic intellectual labor."¹⁰

Many of these arguments have already been discussed in this book; they resolve themselves into a defense of formal discipline, which has been thoroughly discredited, and also into a lack of insight of the relationship between interest and effort. Although I know I am being repetitious, I will drive this point further, for therein lies the crux of the matter.

As I am setting this down, I have before me the *New York Times* of March 3, 1950, in which I have just read the story of Saul H. Sternberg, a sixteen-year-old student at the New York High School of Music and Art, who has won a \$2,800 Westinghouse grand science scholarship awarded on the basis of a nation-wide competition.¹¹ The prize came to him because of his report on the "measurement of the tracks made by helium atoms across a photographic plate."

The following is quoted from the newspaper account:¹²

"How did you get that far in science?" someone asked him. "Mostly from reading books," he replied.

"I used to bring home white rats, leeches and all sorts of little animals," he recalled. "My folks were kind enough to tolerate them."

From his interest in nature, his studies took a more serious turn and led to physics and nuclear research. The idea for his prize-winning project was provided by a cousin, Dr. Henry Primakoff of St. Louis.

To obtain the tracks of the helium atoms, Saul used photographic plates

College] rejected his position. His going marks the end of an era. No one who professes to know education will henceforth stand forth in opposition as he did. Judd is still alive and belongs to much the same position, though for different reasons." *Diary*, July 5, 1946.

¹⁰ In statement to Eunice F. Barnard, printed in *New York Times*, February 27, 1938.

¹¹ When notice came to the high school of the award, Sternberg was absent from school, having played hooky for five days.

¹² "School Acclaims Young Scientist," *New York Times*, March 3, 1950.

impregnated with boron, then persuaded Washington University in St. Louis to bombard the plates with neutrons in their cyclotron.

"It was a great experience to work on the project," Saul said. "It taught me more than any other single thing I ever worked on."

It is not true that learning need be laborious. As Kilpatrick says: "Our old-type school, with its formal subject matter, remote from life, made us think of the learning process as laborious and repellent. But in this typical instance life's inherent learning comes in fact without effort, comes in fact automatically and stays with us." Meaningful learning, that which has importance for us, is not laborious and does not require repetition and memory. When we hear of the death of a friend, or of a Pearl Harbor, or of anything that is significant for our living, it remains with us; we need not drill on it or cram it down. One may have to practice to get a skill right, but that is not repetition; it involves change. A tennis player does not repeat his strokes; if he did, he would never improve. He changes his stroke until he finds a better way of striking the ball and then he fixes it. That is the way learning proceeds.

For twenty-five years before his death in 1919, Pierre Auguste Renoir was racked with pain from illness, but that did not interrupt the ceaseless flow of his work. Toward the end of his days, although he worked propped up in a wheel chair and with a paintbrush tied to his arthritic fingers, Renoir kept on working. Once a teacher, annoyed by his evident good humor, said reprovingly: "You seem to take painting as fun." To which Renoir brusquely replied: "If painting were not fun to me, I should certainly not do it."¹³

In the matter of standards the Essentialists are, in my opinion, probably right. Our high school graduates and probably our college graduates as a group are not so intellectually able nor have they acquired so much subject matter as the Europeans. But this does not at all reflect on progressive methodology. The reasons for this condition are quite different. The American schools are essentially democratic institutions, set up by a democratic people to serve all youth, the dull, the average, and the bright. Three-quarters of all youth of high school age are attending our high schools. This was not always so. In 1870, in all of the United States, there were only 80,000 high school students, and in that year there were more college professors than high school teachers. In 1900 there were only about 500,000 high school students; in 1947, including private schools, we had a high school enrollment of 7,250,000. The story of college enrollment has somewhat paralleled that of our high schools.

¹³ "Enjoy Yourself," *Time*, April 3, 1950.

In 1870 we had 60,000 college students; in 1949 we had about 2,500,000, probably a greater number of college students than all the rest of the world combined. In Europe, schools still consider themselves elite institutions, serving an intellectual aristocracy. As we in America further democratize education, as we attempt to serve students with lower and lower bookish intelligence, it is inevitable that the graduates of such a system cannot compete scholastically with those of a system that exercises rigorous selection, that eliminates unmercifully, that is intellectually aristocratic in purpose, in philosophy, and in administration. However, if the best of our students are compared with their mental equals—for in Europe only the best students would be admitted and could maintain themselves in a high school or a university—then I have every confidence that American high school and college students could hold their own, ably and adequately.

Never in his writing or his teaching or in any other way did Kilpatrick go on record as denying the vital role of the social heritage, its techniques, its ideals, its culture, its traditions.

But how can we go about acquiring the social heritage? It seems that the best way is to keep the child happily and busily adjusting to his present living needs. As has been said previously, the best preparation for well-adjusted living for an eight-year-old is the rich, adequate living of a seven-year-old. A child does not live in a vacuum; he lives in a social environment. This environment creates needs and pressures. If any techniques or skills or knowledges are essential in this social environment, then the child in his living will feel these needs and he will be impelled, willy-nilly, to acquire them. If the growing person is not cognizant of such needs at seventeen or eighteen or nineteen years of age—and if he is living adequately and richly; if he is responding normally and wholesomely to his environment—then these needs per se are not essential for him. Woodworth said: "What you are doing *in toto* determines what you do piecemeal." It is the whole person meeting a situation—that is important. "He who does not go beyond the facts," said Thomas Huxley, "will seldom get as far as the facts." Kilpatrick is not troubled so long as the child is working fruitfully at some self-propelling social interest and if he is interacting wholesomely in his social milieu. "As I look out on life," he declared, "I find a lot of people who don't use arithmetic; and I don't think that life would be any richer for them if they used it . . . they just don't need it."¹⁴

But this does not mean soft pedagogy; quite the contrary. Kilpatrick

¹⁴ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Education of Adolescents for Democracy," *Religious Education*, Vol. XIV, June, 1919, pp. 123-135.

emphasizes "purposing and satisfaction . . . because in sober fact of science they are necessary; but they are not incompatible with hardness. In fact, exactly contrariwise. Hardness of effort must come from within to meet outside difficulties, else shirking and not hardness ensues."¹⁵

As we gain further insight into the learning process, as psychologists have acquired techniques of measuring the retention of subject matter, it has become crystal clear that what children learn in the classroom primarily for examination purposes is for the most part quickly forgotten. As psychologists tell us, the curve of forgetting is sharp. For instance, approximately 75 per cent of the content of a history course will evaporate from the student's mind within a year; the obliteration for algebra is about two-thirds; and for other subjects in similar proportions. This, mind you, after only one year! After five years there is no marked difference in factual knowledge between one who has taken a course and one who has not. What does remain? Attitudes, generalizations, points of view—the very traits emphasized by Kilpatrick.

Furthermore, this very "bookish" subject matter, which, to reiterate, is not the crux of education, is better and more lastingly retained when progressive methodology is used. Investigation after investigation has revealed this clearly and conclusively; in every particular, Kilpatrick's position has been sustained.

Ellsworth Collings, as principal of a Missouri rural school, experimented with a group of children who were taught by the project method. He matched this experimental group with a control group of children in two neighboring schools who were as nearly identical in intelligence, social background, school achievement as could possibly be arranged. He conducted his experiment for four years. His findings were startling. The experimental group—those who were taught by the project method—exceeded the control group in subject achievement by an average of 38 per cent, and this group tested 10.8 per cent above the national average of children of the same grades. But that was not all; in comparison with their opposite group, the experimental group showed decided superiority in character and in attitude toward school. For instance, 93 per cent of the experimental group were never absent, as compared with 5 per cent for the traditional group; in the experimental group there was considerably less truancy; there was a marked drop in the need for corporal punishment; 85 per cent of the experimental group as compared with 10 per cent of the control group were graduated from the eighth grade; and of those graduating, 85 per cent of the experimental group went on to high school as compared with 8 per cent for the control group.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

The desirable educational effects of the experiment transferred to and pervaded the entire community. In comparison with the adjoining community, these parents read more books, newspapers, and magazines; they joined more clubs; they attended more social parties, athletic games; they played more musical instruments; they came to more parents' meetings and they visited the school more frequently. They used the school library and school facilities more frequently; a larger proportion of them voted for a rural high school and a greater teacher levy. On their farms, four times as many progressive school parents made experimental tests with seed corn and almost seven times as many screened their windows and doors to keep out flies and insects.¹⁶

Collings's findings are only typical of a host of other subsequent investigations. Dr. J. Wayne Wrightstone, in his book, *An Appraisal of the Newer Elementary School Practices*,¹⁷ made a careful evaluation of progressive education, using the best available techniques and procedures. Like Collings, he found that pupils in progressive schools were more sensitive to current social, economic, and aesthetic problems; they were superior in developing skill in critical reading; they had better poise, more self-confidence; they had better insight into social relationships; they surpassed traditionally taught children in assuming responsibilities and in initiating activities and in ability to cooperate in working at tasks, and in exercising initiative and leadership. They had a more wholesome attitude toward their schoolwork; and they were more creative in art and in writing. They were more critically minded; and they were better at interpreting facts and in making generalizations. In their leisure time they engaged in a greater number of worth-while activities, such as construction work, painting, writing, caring for pets, visiting libraries and museums, reading books and newspapers. As for the mastery of academic skills and techniques, Dr. Wrightstone concluded that progressive children were the equal of, if not superior to, those taught by conventional methods.

How do progressive high school students sustain themselves in college? The eight-year study answered this question unequivocally and conclusively. In 1932 three hundred liberal arts colleges agreed to admit graduates from progressive schools without the usual entrance requirements.¹⁸ In all about fifteen hundred Progressive students from thirty

¹⁶ Ellsworth Collings, *An Experiment With the Project Curriculum* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1924).

¹⁷ J. Wayne Wrightstone, *An Appraisal of the Newer Elementary School Practices* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938).

¹⁸ "Tomorrow's High School," *Time*, February 16, 1942, p. 53.

schools participated. They were matched as nearly as possible—in age, social status, intelligence, sex, interests, and the like—with fifteen hundred students from conventional high schools. At the end of their school career, a group of impartial college educators carefully sifted the data. What did they find? Again, that progressive students stood out as markedly superior in every respect—from wholesome personality growth to mastery of academic subject matter. Graduates of progressive high schools received higher college grades, a larger proportion became members of Phi Beta Kappa and won other such academic honors; they maintained better personal relationships with classmates; they were more cooperative, tolerant, and self-directing; they were less selfish; they met their personal problems more realistically and intelligently; they read more books; they participated more actively in extracurricular activities; they won more elective offices; they were more social minded, more interested in current affairs; they attended more concerts and dances; they were “more precise and systematic in their thinking.”¹⁹ In only one respect did they fall down percentage-wise; they did not join the Y.M.C.A. in the same proportion as did other students. Furthermore, “the graduates of the six most progressive schools had the best record, the biggest margin of superiority over their fellows.”²⁰

The facts are there—arrived at as scientifically and objectively as is possible—to corroborate all that Kilpatrick has theoretically and philosophically stood for; only those who refuse to admit what they see or those who are unwilling to face or find out the facts can maintain otherwise.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Project Method in Operation

AS ALREADY recounted, Kilpatrick's main purpose in urging the project method was to tap the individual and group interests of children. Through the project he wanted children to examine, explore, plan, and achieve in these interests. During the course of such activities, he felt that the children could become ever-more learned, ever-more integrated, ever-more wholesomely reactive to their environment.

As supervisors and teachers began to adopt the project method, some did such hideous and silly things in its name—obviously misunderstanding both the theory and the practice—that Kilpatrick felt he could no longer sponsor such goings-on. Eventually, he stopped using the term "project method" altogether. "I decided that I would talk," he said, "about wholehearted purposeful activity. Later, people began to use the term 'activity program.' I didn't create the term, but it now seems best to use 'activity program,' if we are to use any term at all. In all of this I discovered what Dewey had said earlier, namely, that it is dangerous to give any idea or movement a name, for people will use it in the wrong way and become confused. Personally, I don't use any term nowadays except 'better education' or 'truer education' or 'more defensible education' or some such expression as that."

To understand what prompted Kilpatrick to reach this decision, it is necessary to gain an insight into what school people did with the project method. I have seen a child behind a crude, homemade microphone, snappily asking, in a staccato voice, such questions as: "What are the boundaries of Brazil?" "What are the exports and imports of Argentina?" "Locate the Amazon River." On being asked the meaning of this procedure the teacher explained that the children were conducting a "radio project." Since she was a strong believer in progressive methodology, she insisted that the children ask the questions.

Another teacher was conducting a project on "The War of 1812." Her method? A child, with the title of chairman, came to the front of the

classroom and called on children to recount various phases of that war; one child read a composition on the causes of the war, another described the principal battles, another the terms of the treaty of peace.

Fundamentally, in these instances, there was no change in either methodology or point of view. It was the same old subject matter, the same regurgitation, the same emphasis on memory of textbook content. Certainly, if the purpose was to quiz children on such content, it would seem that the teacher was better for this job than any pupil, for presumably she was more mature, more experienced, more intelligent.

Supervisors, too, wanted to be progressive; so they insisted that teachers adopt the project method. But at the same time these supervisors insisted that the teachers teach the same subject matter prescribed by the curriculum and they insisted that the children be prepared for the same old-fashioned tests.

On one occasion in India, Kilpatrick was explaining his theories of education. A teacher in a girls' college said that his methodology sounded all right, but she had used it in her class and it didn't work out at all.

Kilpatrick asked: "What topic did the girls choose to work on?"

"Indian peasant mothers, you know, work in the fields and they take their babies with them," she told Kilpatrick. "In order to keep the babies quiet, they give them opium. The girls chose this topic as their problem."

"I immediately surmised," said Kilpatrick, "that this was not the most interesting problem for the girls but that they chose it because they thought their teacher would be pleased. I said nothing to her about this at the time. A little later I asked the teacher, 'What do you think is the greatest interest of these girls?' She said, 'I believe passing examinations,' which was probably true, considering the way they ran things. I then asked, 'What do you think interests them next most?' She said, 'Getting married.' And the third most interesting? She said, 'Having children.' And what's the fourth most interesting? I kept on in this fashion until she became tired. And then I said, 'You haven't yet mentioned opium and the mothers of India.'"

As an early adherent of the project method, I remember with what hope and expectancy I looked forward to educational changes as the movement gained headway. I was then a teacher in the New York City elementary school system. After I saw what school people were doing in the name of this movement, I was filled with disillusionment, with shattered hopes and deep disappointment. In one such bitter mood I wrote an article, portions of which I am now quoting because they were and are still pertinent:¹

¹ Samuel Tenenbaum, "The Project Method: A Criticism of Its Operation in the School System," *School and Society*, Vol. 49, June 17, 1939, pp. 770-72.

The other day the writer had occasion to see an exhibit of projects made by an ungraded class. The ungraded class in the New York City system comprises children under the sixth year whose I.Q.'s are 70 or lower. Any one who has had the least bit of contact with such children knows that they can do little enough academic work. Fortunately, they don't have to know much of this academic work to get along in this world of ours, for there is plenty of simple, routine work to be done. Furthermore, every machine which is invented makes this type of child a more adequate and a more valuable member of the community. Of course, such children should be in school, and much can be done with them, but essentially what they need is friendliness, kindness, sympathy and simple kinds of work, such as weaving, basketmaking, woodwork that is not too intricate, and the like. Occasionally, they do manage to make a beautiful design, and occasionally, under a sympathetic teacher, their woodwork takes on a lustre and a finish that shows perseverance, toil and even a simple kind of skill.

Did any of the exhibited projects done by this type of child include rugs, woodwork, metal work, clothes? No! It would be too plebeian to show off with that sort of thing. But what did they display? A map of the community, drawn beautifully to scale, creative literary outbursts, a replica of the Greek Parthenon, and the like. They were "school people" things, things that teachers like to do. Any one who has any acquaintance at all with the ungraded child knows how ridiculous this type of work is for him, how far removed it is from his needs, interests and abilities. Just imagine plaguing children with I.Q.'s below 70 with drawing maps of the community to scale, of making Greek Parthenons, of writing literary criticisms. Even if they could profit by such activity, it is not for them.

... The project has become teachers' headaches because it has been used by stupid teachers and supervisors, not as an outlet for the child's interest, but as a mandatory task to show off and make the next-door teacher jealous or the next school jealous or the next district jealous or the next city jealous. This is not an attack on the project method, if its original intention is preserved, and the original intention, it should again be pointed out, was to allow the child, in our routinized and formalized school system, to conceive, purpose, plan and execute some task which is inherently his. This is a protest, by a classroom teacher, against the stupid and dishonest way in which this laudable device is being carried out by our school officials.

Here is another case in point to demonstrate what the writer means. You have heard a great deal about the child's need for activity, for experiencing, for seeing and doing, all the most laudable objectives. Bronx County (one of the five boroughs of New York City) held a stamp fair, and the Board of Education of New York City, to be modern and up-to-date, invited all the Bronx schools to attend. The writer does not know how many schools there are in the Bronx, but surely there are more than a hundred. After all, stamps were something that interested or should interest a child, so why not make it a

project, which automatically would make the school officials concerned modern and progressive, and who would refuse being that? Thus, my school sent its quota—about 300, a proportionate group from each class. After all, it wouldn't be fair to spread the value of this enlightening exhibit unevenly. Thus our 300 children started out in holiday spirit, as if on a picnic. When we arrived, there were thousands of other children, from other schools, as well as a sprinkling of adults who had paid regular admission and had come from a genuine interest. The turbulence and the confusion reminded one of a movie cattle stampede. The officials of the exhibit were running around as though wild, never thinking that a simple invitation to so peaceful an institution as a school system would produce this. The herded children were directed this way and that, the sole object being to hurry them out as fast as possible. Strange as it may seem, our 300 children did not mind in the least. They had come as on a lark. They weren't (the overwhelming number of them) in the least interested in stamps, and the teachers' job was to separate them from refreshment stands and from doing general mischief. Three of our children (later I learned they had collections of their own) appeared to be interested in the exhibit. They examined the exhibit with care and intelligence. They felt aggrieved when pushed around. They couldn't be separated from the stamps. They begged to remain, and they could have stayed—interested, fascinated—for hours and hours. But the mass of other children—the hundreds and hundreds of others—felt it part of a holiday, of a big school picnic.

What the writer has described is typical. It is the schoolman's interpretation of activity, doing, experiencing. It seems almost impossible for the average supervisor, and even teacher, to think of one child and his interest. They take a movement, whose object is to break down the formalism of classroom procedures, and in the name of an individualistic approach pervert it to mass procedures and mass attacks. The child should be interested in stamps, and, presto, all children are either assumed to be interested or will be made, by heck, interested. The fallacy of the assumption is this: An interest is not begotten by order and in a moment. You can not make children interested in stamps by telling them to be interested, or even by talking to them about stamps and then commanding them to be interested. An interest is an individual thing. It can not be turned on or off like a faucet. An interest first is caught, almost like a disease. Sometimes, it is caught by being exposed to it; other times exposure creates a hate for it.

But once the child—not the supervisor or the teacher—catches this interest, he carries on, if he is normal. This interest is not necessarily caught in school. It may be caught at home, while reading, from the radio, from the movies, from a friend, from some experience. But once the child has this interest, then the project steps forward, for through the project the child is able to examine, explore and achieve in his particular interest. And during the course of his achievements the child becomes ever more learned and ever more integrated. But at present the cart is put before the horse. Regardless of the child's

interests or needs, he is pushed into all sorts of projects. The result is confusion, chaos, teachers' headaches and ludicrous exhibits!

The following colloquy is taken from Kilpatrick's *Foundations of Method*:

"What are you afraid of?"

"That we will move too fast."

"Fear you'll move too fast! I don't understand."

"I fear the *why* of it will not be sufficiently understood or the *how* of it sufficiently worked out before people are boasting that they have it. In other words I fear it will be made a fad."

CHAPTER XXIX

Around the World

THE Institute of Pacific Relations was organized in 1925 for the purpose of bringing together influential representatives of countries concerned with Pacific problems, especially the threatening difficulties between China and Japan. Although not official representatives of their governments, it was thought that once these delegates came together and frankly discussed Pacific problems, they could, because of their prestige and prominence, influence their respective governments to create changes in policy that would lead to better understanding and better relationships. At its first conference, the institute had tried out the discussion method but it had not proved successful. It had heard of Kilpatrick's notable success with this technique and had asked Kilpatrick to attend its 1927 conference at Honolulu to guide it in this respect. Since Kilpatrick had been planning a round-the-world trip, beginning in August, 1926, this invitation came at an opportune time and he gladly accepted.

At the outset it should be said that Kilpatrick was struck by the fact that in the Orient, particularly in Egypt and India, Ceylon and Japan, the schools did not prepare students for life in their immediate environment. They were formal, bookish, dominated by rigid examinations. In Egypt he visited an orthodox university, the oldest and most famous in the Moslem world. There he saw a professor sitting at a table and around him were gathered a dozen or so students. This cluster was duplicated many times; there were many such tables and many such groups of students. Each professor held before him a book, the Koran, and that comprised the curriculum. Kilpatrick was told that one professor had spent an entire year expounding on the first clause of the first sentence of the first chapter of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

In India students in the secondary schools were not preparing to participate and improve the life around them; only recently had they

begun to get away from examinations prepared by universities in England. They were learning, Kilpatrick said, a foreign culture in a foreign language, and "in a way that did not give them any of the spiritual qualities acquired by British boys." Illustrating how remote it was from an indigenous ongoing culture, Kilpatrick told of one of his Indian students, Dr. Stephen Krishnayya, who in high school began the "study of English history when William the Conqueror landed in Great Britain in 1066, and he learned the history of India only as India was progressively conquered by England." If India had not been conquered by England, its history might have been omitted altogether. He visited Tagore's school, and he saw there some fine things, but he came to believe that in the main India's "school system had been made by the British on the English model and didn't fit India at all."

Even after achieving independence, this anachronistic education appears from other accounts to be still too prevalent in India. In fear and trepidation, pitched to frenzied levels, students enter scholastic eliminatory contests for the limited number of coveted admissions to India's institutions for higher learning. Half of these contestants are destined for inevitable failure because of insufficient accommodations to take care of all college applicants. Describing these examination ordeals, *Time* magazine reports the following: "... day after day in all the great cities anxious teen-agers pored over newspapers, scanning the long columns of numbers that reported the result of the rigid entrance examinations for the Dominion colleges and universities. It was a week of rejoicing for those who had passed. They became family heroes with bright futures as teachers and civil servants."¹

With the rejoicing there comes a parallel crop of suicides. Wrote a lad of seventeen: "I failed my examination for the second time. I cannot be of any use to my family. I have decided to end my life."² Continues *Time*: "All week the newspapers carried reports . . . of 18-year-old Varada Bajula who tried to kill himself by swallowing powdered glass; of Shankar Bhosle, 21, who hanged himself; of the lawyer's son, only 15 years old, who climbed the University of Bombay's 300-foot clock tower and threw himself off."³

Kilpatrick was greatly troubled by India's ignorance, superstition, poverty. "Never did I feel sorrier and sadder for a people and its doctrines. For instance, if a man died, it was the wife who was at fault; she was to blame. Although the British put a stop to a widow's cremation on her

¹ "Failure and Death," *Time*, July 4, 1949.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

husband's funeral pyre, the ill-treatment of widows continued in other ways. What many Indians call holy is incredible. Monkeys are holy, and so are cows. A missionary told me that a monkey living nearby continually came through the window, and if the family were not perpetually watchful, the monkey would snatch the food off the table. He got so tired of the tussle that finally, in desperation, he killed the monkey." This was a serious offense against the mores and he had to bury the body in the dead of night, with the greatest secrecy.

"I visited a college where there were various castes, Brahmans among others. The students ate their meals sitting on the floor. Should the shadow of a member of another caste fall on the Brahman's food, the food becomes polluted and the Brahman will not eat it. I was lecturing outside of Madras, and one of my auditors had come eight hundred miles to hear me. My wife and I invited him to our house and we offered him some drink, lemonade, I believe. But he wouldn't touch it; he had forgotten to bring his own glass with him, and anyone else's glass was forbidden. If a Brahman breaks the caste system, he gains his way back by eating or drinking six products of the sacred cow, to wit, milk, butter, urine, dung, cheese, sour milk."

Kilpatrick came away from India respecting the sincerity and earnestness of its convictions; but he thought that India needed radical changes in culture and radical changes in the civilization.

He visited Gandhi, whom he considers a saint, but views his mystical philosophy as inadequate for India's welfare. Most of all, Kilpatrick believes that India has a need for greater material well-being and a more experimental and scientific outlook.

Conscious of the historical importance of his meeting with Gandhi, Kilpatrick set down a detailed account of it in his diary. Gandhi's home, he noted, was a one-story structure "with a front piazza, much like an old country home in Georgia." On his visit, Kilpatrick found several clerks at work on the piazza, one of them at a typewriter. Gandhi, rather dark, with several of his front teeth out, was "dressed in a loincloth with an extra cloth loosely wrapt around him." He was sitting on a bench and a follower was sitting on the floor near him. Since Kilpatrick's main concern at the time was to explore what was a wise synthesis of Eastern and Western culture, he asked Gandhi to discuss this problem. Gandhi replied that at present it would be best for India to reject all Western culture as far as it could; although he did realize that India could not shut out all Western culture.

Asked by Kilpatrick what Western civilization could contribute to

India, Gandhi replied that he admired Western industry—but not its industrialism—and its disposition to seek the truth.

Kilpatrick seized on the latter point and tried to suggest the need of “testing the truth by its results.” Gandhi appeared to agree, but on his elaboration of the idea, Kilpatrick perceived that Gandhi really did not agree: “He entered into a discussion not clear to me about means and results and concluded by saying that there were certain things definitely to be accepted as means even though we are not able to see the inevitable and good results emerging.”⁴ Among such axiomatic means he listed “(1) the doctrine of nonviolence, and (2) the existence of an unchangeable something (a soul) back of the body, and, apparently, God back of the world. This soul needs expression, not building or changing, and for such expression what is needed is the removal of hindrances. He thus—very pleasantly—rejects as typically Western and to him lacking in a proper ‘humility’ my wish to find out what kind of world (civilization) to work for.” Gandhi appeared to feel that “it was not man’s business to change the world but to carry out his duty in the world that is.”

Kilpatrick told Gandhi that he found it hard to understand what “contemplation” meant. Concerning this, Gandhi said that they both could agree on that. By contemplation Gandhi meant “a conscious and attentive interest in the work (literally) at hand and this for the sake of God (the abiding essence back of us). This he thought necessary if man is to be true to himself and to be properly unified (my words). Then I asked about Tagore’s contemplation. He said this meant ‘relaxing the tension’ and letting the mind run its own course (my words). This he approved for Tagore who is a poet but not for himself and still less for the common run of Tagore’s pupils, as it is likely in many to degenerate into a pretense. I then asked about those who profess to withdraw into absent-minded contemplation from an awareness of the world about us. He said some did this, but he seemed hardly to approve of this at all. He then agreed with me that contemplation is used in all three senses.”⁵

When Kilpatrick pointed out that in the West the “more thoughtful thinkers” were trying to eliminate superstition, Gandhi agreed that India suffered from this trait; and that he too “was trying to banish superstition.” Asked in what way he was doing this, he replied that “his main effort was to show a life freed from superstition.”

When Kilpatrick asked him about his educational program, Gandhi said: “Why, I am surprised that you do not already know. I have very pronounced views on education.”

⁴ Diary, November 17, 1926.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Commenting on this, Kilpatrick said: "I was greatly surprised, dumb-founded in fact. I was under the impression that Gandhi wasn't very much interested in education; that he hadn't said anything about it.⁶ And I sat there for a moment dazed. I saw a spinning wheel right close by. I said, 'Do you mean this?' and I reached out and put my hand on the spinning wheel. He said, 'Yes; that's what I mean, the cottage industries; that is the education which India needs.'"

Near the close of the interview a "German woman follower came in, barefoot, and sat down on the floor. (Previously a man admirer had come in with a coconut, but he had been required to withdraw.) This woman was of a breezy type and soon had Gandhi laughing heartily, joshing him about having much in common with Henry Ford. She laughed about his coming to America in a flying machine, etc. She said she and Gandhi differed about the tractor plow. She favored it, if it would save the crop, but that Gandhi is still opposed."

Kilpatrick came away from the interview with the feeling that Gandhi was a saint, absolutely sincere and selfless, but that he was not a sufficiently inclusive thinker; that he believed in a static universe; "that he distrusted effort, particularly effort in the use of criticized means."⁷ Kilpatrick feared that certain of Gandhi's statements might tend to strengthen the superstition of his people.

Despite this, Kilpatrick believed that Gandhi wielded the most powerful influence in his lifetime of any man who has ever lived and "I exclude no one"; and that this influence was for the good. His program, however, to ameliorate India's poverty, ignorance, superstition, religious intolerance, mysticism was not only inadequate, but in certain respects intrinsically undersirable; Kilpatrick believed that India would eventually swerve off into another path of living and thinking.

Amid the crushing formalism, verbalism, and bookishness that characterized the Indian school system, Kilpatrick found oases of progress and light that to this very day fire him with enthusiasm.

In Moga, Dr. W. J. McKee, a missionary and a former student, had founded a small village elementary school whose curriculum centered around village life and village needs. Dr. McKee wanted his children not only to engage in community activities but to help make the community a finer and better place in which to live.

Schools in India obtain grants of public funds* if, after inspection by educational officials, they come up to predetermined standards. When

⁶ This was before Gandhi had announced "Basic Education."

⁷ Diary, November 17, 1926.

Dr. McKee told the government inspector of his intentions, the official said: "Of course, you will do as you please, but we will withdraw the grant." Dr. McKee pleaded with him to be patient and await results; and the inspector reluctantly consented.

The entire school was conducted solely on a project-method basis. The boys had plots of ground on which they grew vegetables and sold the produce in the local market. When first they started to sell, the problem arose as to how to keep accounts. A committee went to the merchants at the local bazaars to learn how books were kept. They next had to learn how to determine the market price, so that they would not be cheated. A little later two boys said: "We need a market house to house our tools and vegetables."⁸ The school authorities had no house to give them; the boys built their own house. "They set to work first to make the brick, which they did by getting clay, molding and drying the bricks in the sun. Then they built the house six feet long, six feet wide and six feet high, with one window and one door."⁹

Once a boy came back with insufficient money for the radishes he had been entrusted to sell at the market. At first the culprit expressed surprise at the discrepancy; but when his classmates questioned him and pointed to the account in the book, he finally confessed that he had himself eaten part of the produce, and hence could not sell what he didn't have. As punishment, the class decided that he should make good the deficit and pay something extra as a deterrent to others.

With this program, it appeared that the children learned to read better in one year than conventionally taught children in two years.

When the school inspector saw the new program in operation, he said: "It is all right; we will not withdraw the grant."

The school's fame extended so widely that the government asked Dr. McKee to conduct an institute for teachers. It was thought that thirty or forty teachers might attend, but Dr. McKee was amazed when as many as seven hundred and fifty came to study these new methods. The government further granted McKee ten thousand rupees toward the erection of a new building. Sir George Anderson, director of public instruction, told Kilpatrick in 1926 that he intended to organize a normal school to train young teachers to carry out the project-method philosophy of education in every school in the Punjab.

In Ceylon another former student, Charles W. Miller, a missionary, was in charge of a school for girls, aged from nine to about eighteen.

⁸ "Promising Educational Experiments in the Far East." *Progressive Education*, 5:246-50, July, August, September, 1928.

⁹ *Ibid.*

When Mr. Miller assumed his duties, the girls sought every opportunity to avoid the classroom. They simulated sickness. The infirmary was always filled to capacity; some of the girls stayed there as much as a third of the time. When girls went home on holidays, they overstayed their leave by as many as three, four, and five days. After Mr. Miller had inaugurated his new educational program, based on meaningful and significant problems, the girls became so interested that they deserted the infirmary and the school authorities could hardly induce even the genuinely sick to stay for treatment. They didn't want to return home for holidays, and those who did leave promptly returned.

"One of the classes decided to build a house," relates Kilpatrick. "The girls didn't propose to do the carpentry work, but they did lay out the plans most carefully. They made such a close trade with the carpenter that when the job was completed he came back and begged them for more money; which they rightly agreed to pay."

The girls wanted tile floors; they could have bought ready-made tile in the neighborhood, but they wanted to make their own. They made inquiries as to how to go about the task. One brickmaker said: "You have the best clay right in your own yard." How does one proceed? "That's simple," said the brickmaker. "You make a model of the tile you want, fill it with clay, pack it down good and hard, put it out in the sun to dry; and after it is dry, put it in a kiln to bake and there you have it." The girls did as directed, and then placed a number of the molds in the sun and—they all cracked. They went back to the brickmaker and said: "What's the matter? There's something wrong."

"Well," he said, "you've got to mix sand with the clay."

"How much?"

"I don't know. You'll have to try it out and see what happens."

So they went back and in each of twelve molds the girls put a varying amount of sand, some more, some less, keeping careful record of what they did. The sun cracked five of them and seven remained intact. These good molds they took to the brickmaker for baking. Six came out of the kiln cracked and one withstood both sun and heat. They now had a formula and they could make all the tiles they wanted. These tiles proved to be of finer quality and were more durable than any made locally, and the girls sold them in the local markets.

"The success of Mr. Miller with his school was so great," said Kilpatrick, "that the head of the neighboring native public schools came to him and said: 'We want you to teach our teachers how to teach according to this new way.' And Mr. Miller spent several days a week working with them. They remade the school according to his plans. When I visited the area,

the new method had been in operation for a year. I talked with the local principal, I talked with the local school inspector, I talked with the district inspector, I talked with the head of the entire school system, a Scot, who normally would be disposed to a more formal kind of education. They were all in high praise of this new method of teaching." In fact, the Scottish head of the Ceylon school system told Kilpatrick that if there weren't a regulation prohibiting the employment of missionaries, he would hire Mr. Miller "to go all over Ceylon teaching the school personnel how to run the schools." When a local principal told Kilpatrick about how admirably the new method worked, how it had brought students and teachers closer together, Kilpatrick asked: "What is the evidence for your statement?"

Answered the principal: "It's good and clear. It used to take one hundred whippings a week to run this school; now it takes hardly two or three a week."

Kilpatrick came away from India more convinced than ever that what India needed to uplift the land from its morass of poverty, ignorance, superstition, deadening mysticism, and intolerance was a village school system run on the project method, seeking to remake the community, with a curriculum based on home, village, and agricultural life. He was in a neighborhood where the farmers used a crude, primitive plow; the same plow they had used three thousand years; and no one could get them to change. Kilpatrick told of a school where children were given plots of land on which to practice scientific farming. "I saw this boy," he said, "trying experiments, and if he lives two or three years on this basis, it will be no trouble to persuade him that a better thing is a better thing."

Under the auspices of the National Association for the Advancement of Education in China, Kilpatrick spent about five months in that country; he traveled extensively and was indefatigable in visiting schools, meeting with teachers, lecturing at universities and learned societies, renewing associations with former students; and, most enjoyable of all, probing in intimate and small discussion groups the attitudes and sentiments of native Chinese. Kilpatrick had always been particularly fond of the Chinese; and as a result of his stay there, this fondness turned into a lifelong interest, affection, and warm sympathy.

What impressed him about China was its "love of learning, love of beauty and genuine courtesy." Coming as he did from caste-ridden India, he was also vividly struck by the absence of hereditary castes in China. An explanation for this agreeable difference arose from the fact that for

almost two thousand years the important official positions in China had been filled by fairly honest competitive examinations, permitting intelligent, able, and talented young people from all classes to rise to eminence. This gave a dynamic, flexible character to China's society, and inevitably it led, said Kilpatrick, to the abolition of feudalism, which was a system based on hereditary rights.

"In India," said Kilpatrick, "a servant kept strictly to his station; he never assumed equality in any way. In China, a servant acted quite differently. To illustrate: in Shanghai, a group of rather prominent businessmen came together so that I could discuss with them the political situation. At one point of the discussion, none of us knew the facts of a certain situation. A servant, who was waiting on us, did know and he unhesitatingly volunteered the information. This would have been unthinkable in India; and it would be hardly likely to happen in this country. But it did happen in China."

Kilpatrick perceived a grave and serious weakness in Chinese culture. The strongest loyalty and the deepest concern extended too often exclusively to the family; they did not go beyond that. The next-door neighbor could be pillaged, looted, starved, but if the victim was not part of the family, the typical Chinese would pass by. A Chinese could pass by the injured, the dying, the wounded, and the dead—if there were no blood ties. The central loyalty was family loyalty; and this did not extend to the neighborhood, the community, the nation, or the world. This limited, circumscribed loyalty was debilitating, narrowing, demoralizing. Kilpatrick came to believe that this was the core reason why China has had difficulty in creating a strong, moral, social-minded society.

In lecture after lecture, Kilpatrick decried this narrow, self-centered, limited loyalty, and urged a loyalty and a search for the common good that would encompass wider and wider areas. Although Kilpatrick is hopeful that this change will eventually take place, he concedes that the process will be slow and long. Education should provide the pivot for this new morality. He urged that Chinese schools become an integral part of real community living; and that the schools be committed to remake the community, so that the life of the community will become continually better.

In an address¹⁰ before the Chinese Social and Political Science Association he indicated a program for Chinese schools, as follows:

Someone told me that nine-tenths of the infants in China have died because of improper care. Then a study should be made not only of the home life but

¹⁰ May 9, 1926.

of village life, schools, recreation of the villages and more particularly the economic system, the ways of forming the household industries, etc. Let us think of an ideal village—the best one that I can think of. I have a picture of what this village is and another of what it might be. Suppose it should take a number of generations to move from one type to the other. Ask yourself then how much might be done in one generation, if you set the village school specifically to work at this problem. . . . You see I am proposing that the school take life itself as the first thing. Make this village life the aim of the school procedure and let reading, writing, and arithmetic, etc., come second in importance and it will be second in time in connection with the other things, but let life—village life—be the main thing.¹¹

From China he went on to Japan, where he traveled and spoke under the auspices of the Osaka *Asahi*, a Japanese newspaper. There too he visited schools, held intimate discussions with small groups, and lectured extensively. From Tokyo he sailed for Honolulu, where he advised the Institute of Pacific Relations on discussion techniques; he also led a discussion group; assisting him was Malcolm MacDonald, now a prominent British official.

Professor Kilpatrick took a continuing interest in the affairs of the Institute of Pacific Relations. Through the kindness of young Dean William F. Russell, who had succeeded his father, Kilpatrick was able to attend the institute's next meeting in Kyoto, Japan, in 1929, but this time he went as a full-fledged member of the American delegation.

He stopped over at London, where he addressed the World Association for Adult Education at Cambridge. Here he expounded his views as to why education was a continuous process, coterminous with life. Since change was the main characteristic of our fast-moving dynamic society and since the main purpose of life was an ever-wiser adjustment to change, education was, as Kilpatrick viewed it, the core and crux of life. We can no longer depend on religion or tradition or custom or any

¹¹ In this address he pointed out that science was the main hope of China. He also attacked the old concept of absolute control of private property as no longer tenable in a moral world. Factories were once small, employing a few persons; and no one of them was crucial for the common good. Now a factory employs thousands, and it is crucial, and hence it can no longer be held that a person can do what he wants with a vital link of the common good. He did, however, bluntly and unequivocally reject communism as the solution for China's problems. Speaking in 1926, when Russian influence was strong in China, he said: "Communism in China now is a vicious thing, so much so that it tears everything it touches and puts nothing in its place." He was equally repelled by foreign intrusion in Chinese affairs and unequal foreign treaties with which China was saddled.

other kind of external authority; and, hence, it becomes increasingly necessary for man to place his faith in his own thinking—on an experimental outlook—on “conscious reflection and criticized values instead of imbibed beliefs.”¹² At another point, he said: “Adult education becomes practically coextensive with all shared efforts to face life’s problems.”¹³

The “supreme problem of our time,” he said, was the need of man to derive inductively a faith and a philosophy of life. With the possible exception of the Athenians, man has never been confronted with a more perplexing problem than shifting his institutions from a traditional to an experimental basis. He ascribed the desire for excitement, for adventure, for inane, tawdry commercial, passive amusements—“cheap in money cost as in character”—to mass production which has crushed human personality and has robbed man of a feeling of dignity and worth-while-ness. “The thoughtful and conscientious mind is harassed and torn as it contemplates these . . .” A problem equally serious was “the loss of faith in a religion or philosophy adequate so to unify personal endeavor and outlook as to permit the giving of oneself unstintingly to a worthy cause.”¹⁴ We are confronted by moral chaos; the old solutions are not adequate. “The problems tend to outrun solutions.”¹⁵ As H. G. Wells said: “Civilization is a race between education and catastrophe.”

But yet he did not want this education even remotely to resemble traditional schooling. It is true that adults should always be learning, but the learning should focus on environmental problems, wherever they may arise—in the community, in social relationships, in economics, in politics, in morals. It should not center around a textbook, nor thinking for thinking’s sake. The emphasis should be on action after thinking, on experimental solutions, on growth, which to Kilpatrick meant acquiring the ability to do things ever better, ever more intelligently.

From Cambridge he journeyed to Mainz, Germany, where he participated in a conference on American education. And from there he went to Poland, where, to his astonishment, he discovered that the doors of the schools were barred to visitors; and that special permission was required to gain admission; and then on to Russia, where he was warmly welcomed, and where he found the school doors wide open for visitation and investigation.

¹² Address before the World Conference on Adult Education, August 23, 1929.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

If truth be told, he came to Russia strongly disposed in that country's favor, perhaps overly influenced by the liberal policies of the Kerensky regime. He thought that from Russia, with its emphasis on internationalism and the common brotherhood of man, would come a stronger league of nations and a supranational government; and from it also would come the impetus for the cessation of exploitation of weak and subject nations; and from it also would emanate the powerful groundwork that would at last make the world "safe for democracy." In Russia during this period, the Dewey-Kilpatrick school of thinking had highly placed and influential adherents. Directly after the Russian Revolution, Commissar of Education Lunacharsky, who was a strong admirer of Dewey, had jettisoned the old system of education, and, starting from scratch, had molded a new one based on Dewey's teachings.

When Kilpatrick went to Russia in 1929 he discovered that he was well known; that his books had been translated into Russian and were being used in all the teacher-training institutions. On his arrival he was warmly greeted by Professor Pinkevich, who at the time was president of a Moscow university, and whom Kilpatrick had come to know while he was a visiting professor in the United States. At the Russian educational bureau he received an equally cordial reception.

"Am I free to go anywhere I wish?" asked Kilpatrick incredulously.

"Yes," he was told, "you are free to go into any school at any time without asking anybody anything."

At the time Professor Counts of Teachers College was visiting Russia. He was away from Moscow, traveling somewhere; and he placed at Kilpatrick's disposal his secretary, Miss Nucia Perlmutter, who spoke and read Russian.

Early one morning Kilpatrick and Miss Perlmutter went up to the first policeman they met and asked him to direct them to the nearest school. Kilpatrick thought that this provided the best way of locating a typical Moscow school. Later he asked to be shown what was reputed to be the best school in Moscow; and he also visited a variety of other schools. He saw much that he liked and much that he was doubtful about; and a great deal that he positively disliked. The students were eager, curious, asked questions, and within limits made many decisions and assumed many responsibilities. Each school was controlled by a tripartite body, called a soviet, comprising representatives of the faculty, the students, and community organizations. The teaching methodology then in vogue was called the "complex" method. It differed from the project method, in that topics were assigned from a central bureau; every grade and every school in the land had to choose from these assigned topics *what* they

would study; the *how* was decided by the teachers and the class. On one of Kilpatrick's visits, a fourth-grade class was engrossed on this problem: "How can we increase the yield per acre?"

Once a class began working on a topic, the teacher was allowed wide latitude, and the emphasis was on student planning and decision. When Kilpatrick suggested that teachers might feel obligated to follow the centrally suggested procedures and methodology, both teachers and students demurred. "We are not," they said. In proof, a teacher asked one of the children to bring up his notebook, and when Kilpatrick compared the contents with the central directives, he noted considerable variations and he became convinced that within the limits of "the complex," teachers and children had a great deal of freedom. The three R's were not taught as such, but were acquired incidentally from tasks at hand. In all respects the schools were an auxiliary agency to forward the nation's purposes. In the "Bio-Station for young Naturalists" a student was engaged in the study of meteorology to help farmers; another student was experimenting with the rearing and training of carrier pigeons for war purposes; a group of students was concerned with the problem of disposing of disintegrating carcasses of animals left frozen on the roadside, both for the salvage of fertilizer and leather and for better sanitation.

The children showed enthusiasm for their work and the teachers generally approved of the new system. "Considering the magnitude and the scale of the scheme," said Kilpatrick, "no school system in history has been more thoroughly and consistently made to work into the social and political program of the state. It may be regarded without exaggeration as the outstandingly ambitious enterprise that educational history has to show. . . . Similarly even down to the smallest detail in the school curriculum, every item is planned to further the Soviet plan of society."¹⁶ In Kilpatrick's opinion, it was even more far-reaching, more far-flung, and more thorough than the educational system devised by the Jesuits. Furthermore, said Kilpatrick, "if I ever saw a people dead in earnest, I saw them in Moscow."¹⁷ Russian officialdom impressed him as being as honest and as sincere as any group of missionaries.

He spoke to Shatsky, an important educator who was in charge of fifteen to twenty village schools. Shatsky was familiar with the latest educational books and theories; and, in the course of his conversations, he mentioned that he was most favorably impressed with Collings's *An Experiment With the Project Curriculum*. "In two more years," said

¹⁶ Address at Yenching University, which appeared in the *Peiping New Leader*, October 18, 1929.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Shatsky, "I am going to have my village schools one hundred per cent on the project method."

Even at that time indoctrination and propaganda permeated the Russian school system; and this phase of its program repelled Kilpatrick. In one class he saw a poster depicting a child pushing a parent forward from the rear, with the caption: "Where are you pushing us?" The answer: "To invest in the loan." He saw another poster listing parents' names, and alongside were their monthly earnings and the amounts they subscribed for government loans. In one school, Kilpatrick relates, "an English-speaking pupil had been called to talk with us, a bright girl of about sixteen. I asked her if there were among the pupils any who were not antireligious. Her 'Oh, no' spoke volumes. It seemed as if we had asked an old-stock American group of pupils at the climax of the war as to how many of them were pro-German. The posters were lurid enough. One had a central picture showing a cross with the words 'In the name of God.' About it were grouped a priest drinking wine with a woman of the street.

"The children asked a great many interesting questions but many of them showed a strongly unfair emphasis on what had been told them. One child said he had heard that if a pupil in America should draw a picture showing a human descent from a monkey he would be kicked out of school. They asked about singing revolutionary songs, and about separate schools for children of labor people. Nearly all had a truthful element, but none gave a true picture. The teachers in a later conference asked many questions, but none gave a true picture. . . . I questioned some picked children on the pupil government, some quite good."¹⁸ This propaganda repelled him. "It was sad—this propaganda of the worst type, a caricature of truth."¹⁹

The children could not question fundamental assumptions, but once they accepted them, then within this framework they could be independent and suggest changes. The authorities "assume they already know what is finally to be believed and that they know it beyond all peradventure; the truth cannot be questioned and they cannot be questioned. Furthermore, they must teach their children in such a way that they may have no questions." After such indoctrination, the children's minds were closed to all possibility of reform and change and improvement.

He doubted that such teaching could ever make citizens who could "think for themselves instead of just thinking as their leaders tell them."

¹⁸ Diary, September 10, 1929.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

When he quite frankly expressed these sentiments to Shatsky, whom he respected as an educator, the latter disagreed with him. Neither did Kilpatrick like a central bureau assigning topics, for this curbed teacher and pupil initiative, and it did not allow schools to take advantage of local history or needs or environmental differences. Another fatal weakness inherent in this arrangement was that "pupils and teachers are used as means to an end, for a social program without considering what is best for the pupil himself. In addition topics planned from above may not fit child nature and interest."²⁰

Another aspect of the Russian school system that appalled Kilpatrick was the militaristic propaganda and the warlike frame of mind it engendered. Wherever he went he saw this preoccupation with war and preparation for war. While he was visiting a school, "a siren was sounded as a signal for all workers to protect themselves as a war measure, someone said with gas masks. These things with click-heel kind of salutation make one think that the Soviet is of much the old mind."²¹

When he inquired as to the reason for "the prevalence of war propaganda and the development of the war spirit," he received this answer: "We must. All capitalist countries hate us."²² Kilpatrick noted in his diary: "They forget that most of the hate is due to their Third International methods and efforts to bring on a class war and in general to stir up trouble."

It would be erroneous to suggest that Kilpatrick was altogether dubious and unimpressed with what he saw. For here he found earnest, enthusiastic, eager children—from the very youngest to the oldest—engrossed in socially useful activities and actually helping to solve real environmental problems.

Asked how the Russian schools he saw compared with those in the United States, Kilpatrick said: "Their best was not as good as our best, but the worst I saw was much better than the worst that I knew to exist here, so that I would say that on the whole it had a very good school system." Compared with Europe, the Russian school system was undoubtedly the most forward looking.

What Kilpatrick did not know was that even while he was visiting these schools, the system he was seeing was being scrapped and the Russian proponents and founders of this progressive system were either being "liquidated"—a modern euphemism for official "murder"—or were

²⁰ Address at Yenching University which appeared in the *Peiping New Leader*, October 18, 1929.

²¹ Diary, September 8, 1929.

²² Diary, September 11, 1929.

being quietly relieved of any power or influence. As Kilpatrick is now able to reconstruct the whole story, it seems that for a period of two years this steady and quiet "liquidation" had been going on, and what Kilpatrick saw was the continuing momentum of a system running on steam created by dying embers of a banked fire.

Even while Kilpatrick was in Russia he did not see or hear of Lunacharsky, who had been the principal architect of the new system. Kilpatrick now believes that he was liquidated in 1928 or 1929, for since then no one has ever heard from him nor has anyone been able to find out what happened to him. "Now I understand how they do things," said Kilpatrick. "At that time I did not fully understand."

When Stalin achieved complete power, among his first acts was to cast overboard progressive education; and in a year or two he restored the Russian school system to a basis of formal textbooks, recitations, and examinations; and so it continues at present. Kilpatrick estimates that Stalin pushed back the Russian educational system by seventy-five years.

Kilpatrick accounts for the retrogression this way: When the Communists obtained power, they could not trust the old Czarist teachers. They did have a group of young, indoctrinated, loyal children; and, hence, they gave prominence in their school program to these young Communists, who became the leaders in school activities, and who were in a position to inform the authorities of any untoward or suspicious move by the faculty. In the thirties, perhaps by 1933, Stalin had not only obtained unquestioned power, but the Communist Party had already indoctrinated a new crop of teachers, so that Stalin did not need to have children serve as informers. He now had a brand-new set of indoctrinated teachers who could be relied on to do a good job of further indoctrination.

As a postscript, this should be recorded: First, Shatsky committed suicide about two years later when he learned that he was to be liquidated. Secondly, Kilpatrick never heard again from Professor Pinkevich, who had been so kind in entertaining him.

"Since the salary of party members was very low, I knew Professor Pinkevich had spent a good deal in proportion to what he earned in entertaining me and I felt indebted to him," Kilpatrick related. "I couldn't offer him money; so I asked his friends what I could do to reciprocate. They said that if I would send him some American books he would like that. When I returned to America, I bought twenty-five or thirty dollars' worth of books and sent them to him. To this day I have never been able to find out whether or not he got them, or anything about them. I have written to him more than once; I tried to reach him through a

Russian student who later returned to Russia, but I have never to this day been able to get word from him."

The ostensible and official reason Russia gave for ditching progressive education was that the children learned poorly, if at all. This denouement delighted every opponent of progressive education, especially Professor Bagley, who frequently cited this alleged failure as a defense for traditional education. The real reason for the change, Kilpatrick maintains, was that Stalin wanted the children to be indoctrinated and to believe what the leaders wanted them to believe; he wanted the children to be docile, obedient, unquestioning. No authoritarian government can afford to have its school system dominated by a project-method philosophy; for that kind of education is anathema to any form of authoritarian government; for it trains children to be independently thinking, self-directing, experimentally minded, questioning adults.

As a spokesman for the Institute of Pacific Relations, he saw Madam Lenin in an effort to get her to use her influence to have Russia send an official delegation to the Kyoto conference. Kilpatrick recounts: "I found out that Madam Lenin understood English but that she refused to speak it. I explained my mission to her; I perceived she understood what I said, but still she had what I said translated for her. In reply, she said: 'The party will decide.' I told her that, of course, I knew that all the time; but when the matter comes up before the proper committee, I should like you to say a kind word for that proposal. She said: 'The party will decide.' I explained again. She reiterated: 'The party will decide.' I couldn't get another word out of her, except that 'the party will decide.' That was all."²³

²³ Unofficial Russian observers were present at the Kyoto conference, but the government was not represented by an official delegation.

PART VII

His Present Outlook

CHAPTER XXX

You Learn What You Live

WHEN Kilpatrick returned from abroad in 1929, he saw with dismay that a new spirit seemed to have gripped the teaching profession; they had begun to think of themselves as scientists, as hardheaded realists. Thorndike and his school of thinking were winning out. Thorndike's brilliant work with animal mazes, puzzle boxes, with measurement of intelligence, aptitudes, memory, fatigue, transfer of training ("everything that exists exists in quantity") was now bearing fruit. He had laid the groundwork and now his students and others were themselves bringing forth an avalanche of tests—tests to test teachers, tests to test children, tests to test behavior, tests to test personality, tests to test methodology, tests to compare teachers with teachers, tests to compare class with class, tests to compare a district school with another district school, tests to compare a state school system with another state school system.

Caught up by the booming, prosperous, materialistic pre-1929 era, when the successful businessman was deified and represented the glory of America, old and young educators wanted to imitate business methods and business ways. Like managers of a plant, they too wanted order and efficiency and graphs. These so-called scientific tests fitted peculiarly and uniquely into this kind of thinking. Like hardheaded businessmen, educators now could point to results, measurable results. From these batteries of tests they could produce facts, figures, and graphs. Confident of their new tools, they could now use the jargon of statistical science, "not empty talk or theory."

Like business, the school system experienced a great expansion. The booming birth rate of the twenties was reflected in booming, bulging school registrations. During this period, the public took education to its heart as never before; and education was hailed as a new panacea for all social ills, delinquency, poverty, and crime. Educators, naturally,

welcomed this new source of support, and now, with their new scientific apparatus, they felt equal to any task; they no longer felt inferior to the world of business or to the world of science, for had they not combined the best features of both.

This new spirit had not emerged overnight; but Kilpatrick became aware of it with striking force. In his classroom he now observed a strange indifference and lack of interest in theoretical and abstract problems; he observed that many of the brightest and ablest students of the college shied away from his courses; that they were concentrating on courses in educational psychology, administration, and technical aspects of testing.

In his diary, he set down the following:

Talk with Raup and Childs over philosophy in the College. I am not satisfied, but it is hard to draw sure conclusions. Twelve years ago every candidate (almost) for the doctor's degree studied with me. My classes increased in size until the semester of 1926. While I was away [1926-27] the hold seemed broken. Now philosophy has no favored place on the Ph.D. matriculation, being now only one among the many. Also many rivals have grown up. Also "science" has become militant. Also, it seems, my position has grown more definitely and as such it is less acceptable to certain of my colleagues. Also—I think a factor—there has been a moral decline since March, 1918. Harding was effect and cause. Every thing ideal has been in decline. There may be other factors. Now I have nearly as many students as ever, but the student body has grown and I think a fair canvass will show that I do not have certain of the strong group. Administration [department] is definitely passing me by. I am a good bit troubled, I try to see whether there is anything I can do. So far I don't see anything except to do better what I have all the while been trying to do.¹

Kilpatrick felt strongly that the so-called "scientific" influence in education was undesirable and could become positively harmful; that it was leading educators to take the wrong path, one that they would regret. He felt sure that the whole movement was wrong in spirit, wrong in direction; that it was not scientific; that it was based on fallacy and error.

Furthermore, this movement had another undesirable concomitant. It entrenched the status quo. When a test set forth "norms," or average achievement, it was only establishing averages based on existing aims and purposes. It also lent itself to the existing line and staff arrangement (so popular in the world of business) and encouraged a central educational office to work out curriculum and procedures and "hand it down the line for execution and proceed in due time to test results." Thereby

¹ Diary, October 27, 1930.

the already authoritarian hold of supervisors was strengthened and democratic participation by all those concerned with the educational process weakened.

Although he himself had used Thorndike's laws of learning as a basis for his *Project Method* and *Foundations of Method*, Kilpatrick in 1930 broke with the S-R psychology of Thorndike, in the belief that his influence was leading education astray:

Psychology was . . . reduced to physiology and this analyzed . . . into neurones. Such things as satisfaction and readiness were defined, not in terms of the life process of the organism as a whole, but as belonging primarily to the neurones supposed to be concerned. Similarly, the learning process was studied in the supposedly simpler . . . cases of rats learning to run a maze, of the conditioning of dogs, and of humans memorizing nonsense syllables. Whether learning nonsense syllables could give us reliable data on learning in meaningful situations was not considered.²

Kilpatrick came to the conclusion that Thorndike stood for an atomistic approach. An individual, maintained Kilpatrick, is more and greater than the sum of his parts. You can have two eyes, two legs, two ears, two hands—every part of the human being—but you will not have a human being. The human being is indissoluble, one and whole, and you can never get at him by studying him piecemeal—by measuring his memory, his subject-matter mastery, his fatigue point, his mechanical, verbal, and abstract ability. A human being is purposeful in behavior; he is motivated by ideals, attitudes, interests, wants; and it is only by considering this whole functioning, purposeful individual that you can ever hope to understand him.

You must have the life there first, and the life is there before the arms are there, before the legs are there, before the head is there. The head, arms, legs come out of the life, actually coming by differentiation out of the whole which existed before these parts. You do not make a biological whole by putting such things together. Biologic parts are differentiations from a prior existing whole. So this so-called science of education is willing to have children acquire little pieces, one at a time, with the idea that they can be put together to make a person, to make an educated person, a whole. It cannot be done that way.³

Kilpatrick "launched a fight to break the present thralldom of American education to objective measurement. I deem this the greatest present handicap to growth of a better idea. It will be no easy task and I may not

² W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Proper Work of the Teacher," *Educational Trends*, Vol. 7, No. 5, September-October, 1939.

³ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Principles and Practices in Health Education," included in *Sixth Health Education Conference* (American Health Association, New York, 1931), pp. 5-22.

live to see victory, but I think things are moving already in that direction."⁴

Educators have been misled by the Newtonian approach; man can never be understood by the techniques and methods of physics, Kilpatrick contended. Man's growth and development are part of a biological process, not physical or mechanical. Educators by adopting atomistic Newtonism have slighted and belittled "all the highest manifestations of life and personality . . . Life and education are too precious to be trusted to Newtonian physics."⁵ It is impossible ever to know the child by cutting him up into "little pieces of knowledge, separate skills, separate habits and the like. . . . Instead, it is to invite maladjustments. A better science must protect education and the fair name of science from such misdirected endeavors."⁶

Physics leaves out the most important elements in man, since it can't measure it. "In physics, as studied by Newton, thought and the whole experimental life had no place. Matter as solid, hard, massy particles was everything. Matter and motion together explain all. Metrical data alone were considered. Color, sound, odor, and taste did not belong to reality, and any whole wherever found was exactly equal to the sum of its parts."⁷ This Newtonian atomism excluded "mind, thought, purpose, value—all characteristics of human personality as such . . . We can now see how . . . the traditional conception of learning, the traditional promotion-by-test school management, and the measurement extremists all support each other. Combined they keep the school too often and too much in its old inadequate ways."⁸

This atomistic approach to education was already responsible for horrible things. Kilpatrick was especially appalled by the homogeneous grouping—the XYZ classes, as they came to be called—that was spreading throughout the country like a cancerous growth. These classes were the ugly and inevitable excrescence of this new educational science. Since psychologists believed that they could measure children's intelligence, and since they believed that this intelligence determined the speed, rate, and quality of learning, the next logical step was to divide children into groups—slow, average, and bright—and then separate the

⁴ Diary, January 1, 1930.

⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Future of Education in America and for America," Valedictory Address, August 9, 1937.

⁶ W. H. Kilpatrick, "What Do We Mean by Progressive Education?" *Progressive Education*, December, 1930.

⁷ W. H. Kilpatrick, "A Reconstructed Theory of the Educational Process," *Teachers College Record*, 32:530-58, March, 1931.

⁸ *Ibid.*

groups into homogeneous classes. It was thought that teachers could better gauge the quality of instruction in accordance with the varying intellectual abilities of the children. The result of this, said Kilpatrick, could be nothing but a disregard for human personality. It was inevitable that children in the slow classes would learn that they were marginal and defective and this would create lasting hurt to their personalities. It would also harm the children in the bright classes, for they would come to think of themselves as superior specimens of the human race, creating traits of snobbishness, conceit, and antidemocratic attitudes.

"I should say," Kilpatrick told a group of teachers, "that there are some children that are institutional cases, that they must be put into an institution for the feeble-minded. Any child that has the ability to go around loose in our world, we should find a place for in our world and not label him stupid. No matter what you call the class, Opportunity Class or what, he becomes a dumb bell to the children and himself. You don't fool him. And maybe in that class is someone who can sing better than anyone else; someone who has a finer sensitivity than someone else. When we put them in this class, we have given them a stamp of inferiority."⁹

He was also appalled by the educators' increasing preoccupation with the I.Q., and the whole movement to classify children into hard and fast categories. But even worse was the growing sentiment that only from the high I.Q.'s, from the very bright children, could come leadership, creativeness, and social growth. Among the psychologists there arose a group that made light of democracy; they contended that, since the system enshrines the mediocre and the average, who are inherently incapable of high intellectual power and insight, democracy was based on a dead weight of dull mediocrity.

To counter such thinking, Kilpatrick advanced a different view of intelligence. He did not deny that in intelligence there was a component of innate heredity, which, from what we know at present, appeared to be physiologically determined. But a more inclusive view of intelligence was what he called "effective intelligence," which was functional and problem solving in character; and this effective intelligence could endlessly grow and grow and endlessly expand and expand. Intelligence tests, he maintained, were intended to show innate ability.

For the real problems of living, innate intelligence must be developed into "effective intelligence." The capacity for any person to learn, to progress, and to improve upon his native intelligence is very great. There

⁹ Mimeographed report of a conference of teachers of the Webster Groves (Mo.) Public Schools at Northwestern University, 1940.

is no reason to believe, he said, that the innate intelligence of man has changed since the Stone Age. Our present culture is not due to any increase in native intelligence, but represents the accumulated building up of the effective social intelligence. To illustrate: The average, ordinary chemist today knows more chemistry and can reach more adequate and truer conclusions than the medieval chemist, even though the latter may have been a chemical genius. Every time a new invention comes into being, a new technique, a new process; every time society or an individual makes an advance in knowledge or insight, each individual—every one of us—becomes more intelligent, better able and more intelligently able to grapple with the problems of living. This is the really important intelligence, not the *mere innate but the effective, functional intelligence*. There is no limit to the growth of this kind of intelligence; it depends on the collective wisdom of individuals and groups.

"Ask Einstein about relativity and he is a genius. Ask him about Pennsylvania politics and he is—in present effective intelligence—inferior to any ward politician."¹⁰ This effective intelligence, as opposed to mere innate intelligence, is a matter of learning. "The more we learn about anything, if only we keep checking up what we learn against others, the more effectively intelligent we become. In this way Presbyterian Scotland grew in a century or two to be astonishingly intelligent in theology, more so—I believe—than in any other like group of people in the history of the world. In the same way, Germany became literary, and Italy musical."¹¹

In Central Africa a fountain pen has no meaning for any of the natives. In America a fountain pen has meaning for all. "It took more effective intelligence," declared Kilpatrick, "to sense the need and devise the instrument than it does now either to make or to use it. The group as a whole can now do what a little while ago none in it could do. The effective intelligence of the group has been raised by inventive genius. The effective intelligence of individual members of the group can be raised by learning what the inventive geniuses have thus placed at their disposal.

"This is the process of building intelligence: First, the group culture is enlarged and enriched by certain ones who are more capable along that line; second, the rest of the group (in greater or lesser degree) learn what culture has to offer. Throughout, the process has been a social affair; and the result, the new intelligence is a social product. Strictly private

¹⁰ W. H. Kilpatrick, "First Things in Education," *School and Society*, December 26, 1931.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

intelligence is a chimera. Effective intelligence is socially contrived and socially transmitted. Actual communication in shared efforts is the effective process."

By 1933 Kilpatrick had remade his educational psychology on an organismic, Gestalt basis. Any psychological system that seeks to break up a living organism into discrete, separate parts is laboring under a fundamentally wrong assumption. One can never reach a truthful concept of a child, or any living organism, by such a methodology. Man can only be understood, Kilpatrick declared, as a total goal-seeking, purposive organism, who by his intelligence seeks to satisfy his desires and wants and goals. Since "purposeful activity is the very essence of thoughtful living . . . thinking is for man the most significant aspect of the total organism."

Furthermore, learning should show itself in some change in the person, and learning has significance "only in the degree that it is so built into one's action system as to form the basis for future action."¹² Since the individual must change and remake himself if he is successfully learning, learning is essentially an active process—an inner active one—and it cannot be passive; it cannot be an obedient acceptance of anyone else's learning. Each individual, if he learns, must remake himself; no one else can do that for him. "Learning cuts as deep as the self comes into action." Said Emerson: "Only so much do I know as I have lived."

How do we learn? Kilpatrick says simply, that we learn what we live. He formulated this idea in more formal language, as follows: "We learn what we live, we learn each response as we accept it for our living purposes, and we learn it in the degree that we live it. And what we thus learn we therein build at once into character . . ."

If a person is to become cultured he must live a life of culture; if he is to learn democracy he must live and practice democracy; if he is to acquire a wholesome character he must grapple with actual situations that call forth those decisions and that behavior which comprises good character. "He who does a good deed," as Emerson said, "is instantly ennobled." If the individual does noble and fine deeds, therein and by so much he learns to be noble and fine; if he does ignoble and mean and selfish deeds he is learning to be ignoble, mean, and selfish. *We learn what we live.* Those who practice living dull, humdrum lives this week are practicing to live such lives next week. Those who practice living vital, interesting, intellectually adventuresome lives this week are perfecting themselves to live such lives next week.

¹² W. H. Kilpatrick, "Life and Learning," *Christian Citizenship for Group Leaders* (Y.M.C.A.) Vol. 16, No. 12, April, 1937.

Said Kilpatrick: "The standards of action which we accept to act on we learn, and they become part of us. If those I accept be high, I become a person of high standards. If low, I become a person of low standards. Whatever I accept to act on, that I learn and it becomes a part of me."¹³

He expatiated on this point of view as follows: ". . . The stronger we live anything the stronger we learn it. And, within limits, the more often and the more variedly we live anything, the stronger we learn it. . . . Who lives a low quality of thinking builds a low quality of mind. Who lives a high quality of living builds a high quality of soul and character. You who hear me are right now building each his own mind, soul and character. What you do about it tomorrow will further so build for good or ill. Each act leaves its kind and quota of effect. The result is inevitable."¹⁴

For education, this point of view is pregnant with large implications. It means that the activities of every classroom—the very learning process—should be suffused with significant living and doing; that the children should be engaged in activities that are meaningful in terms of their own goals and purposes; that the kind of living the children experience in the classroom be such as to make them live richer, better, more interesting, and more adequate lives tomorrow. It is present living—making current decisions, carrying out responsibilities, sharing in social enterprises—that provides the warp and woof in the building of both character and personality. Manners, morals, ethics have to be built while confronting life situations; and they are built on the spot in meeting such situations. There is no other way of building character. Discussion and guidance may help, but the life situation still remains the building blocks that make up the edifice. For that there can be no substitute. To leave out actual living from the educational process is to leave out the very heart and soul of what comprises desirable learning.

¹³ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Essentials of the Activity Movement," *Progressive Education*, October, 1934.

¹⁴ Convocation Address, Hampton Institute, October 29, 1943.

CHAPTER XXXI

Hutchins-Adler and Books

STRONGLY opposed to the Kilpatrick philosophy of education stand President Robert Hutchins and Professor Mortimer Adler, both of Chicago University. They maintained that there existed absolute truths—justice, morality, ideal government, and the like—and that the function of education was to discover these absolute and universal truths; and that these absolute and universal truths were the same for all men. How could they best be learned and inculcated? Very simply, they said: read, study, discuss what the great minds of all times have discerned about these universal absolutes. Hence, they emphasized a curriculum based on the great books, the masterpieces of all times. Students who studied the thinking of these great minds on these universal subjects would themselves develop sharp and keen minds and would themselves emerge with penetrating and illuminating insights into universal truths. Such a curriculum would best prepare students to solve current problems and to build for themselves a good life.

To Kilpatrick, such an education represented a "rejection of every intellectual advance of the last three hundred years. It goes back to the medieval hypothesis that knowledge preceded man and that it is man's business to find out this a priori knowledge."¹ It went back to Plato, who maintained that there was an inherent perfection "laid up in heaven," and that it was the function of man to discover the eternal truths. The whole movement, Kilpatrick maintained, was based on a discredited formal discipline, "on a return to medieval metaphysics."

It disregarded what we know about how character develops, how personality grows, how human beings acquire social skills and how to live together. This world which the Hutchins-Adler school of thinking held up was not an evolving, dynamic world with the "lid off," it was

¹ In an interview with Eunice F. Barnard, New York *Times*, Magazine Section, March 21, 1937.

static, fixed, predetermined. In this education there was no interaction of the individual with his environment; no provision for grappling with meaningful present problems; no chance for acting on thinking and for testing thought; no chance for students to plan, discuss, and assume responsibilities in rebuilding and refashioning their environment; no chance to practice social participation. With this kind of education, students were indeed living in a closed universe. The Hutchins-Adler school of thought disregarded the fact, said Kilpatrick, "that man is a behaving organism and that ideas are the basis of *behavior*, and if you want to build character you have to emphasize action and behavior."

Furthermore, the writers of these classics and masterpieces were concerned with gaining insight and solving contemporary problems. They wrote for a particular environment, for a particular audience, living in a particular milieu. It would truly be a sad reflection on our own thinking, on our own intelligence, on our own culture to believe that these men—living in a different time, in a different place, trying to gain insight into problems different from ours—should have said the last and definitive word about our peculiarly own and unique present problems and needs. Surely it would be a matter of despair if these writers, living generations ago, said wiser things about our current problems and our current living than our own contemporary writers and thinkers; then surely we would be bereft of hope.

Said Kilpatrick: "The idea of taking Newton's *Principia*, which is about the first book of modern science, and using that as a text for learning modern science is ludicrous. Students ought to be learning modern science, current science, and ought to be studying the best thought since Newton, rather than going back to that old book which was written in a style that no boy can manage to understand."

CHAPTER XXXII

Kilpatrick and the Social Crisis

AT MERCER UNIVERSITY Kilpatrick was associated with religious heresy. At Teachers College he was associated with "social" heresy. Never approving of the role of "ivory tower" thinking and living, he joined with faculty members and students in vigorous support of forward-looking and liberal movements. His habit of speaking his mind fearlessly, unequivocally, forthrightly led him into many controversies, mostly with conservative and reactionary forces. He has had the honor of being included on subversive lists, along with many of the finest men and women of his generation. At various times he has been held up as a menace to the nation and to youth by such organizations as the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Ku Klux Klan, the American Legion, the Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

Kilpatrick was a profound admirer of President Wilson, and he believed that a supranational government, some form of a strong League of Nations, was the only way to save the world from anarchy, violence, and gangsterism; the only way to substitute reason and justice for physical force. In his own forthright manner he waged constant warfare against those cynical and reactionary forces which thought in short-range self-interest. But that was only one of his battles. He spoke forcefully against many other trends. He attacked teachers' loyalty oaths as "hysterical outbursts"; the custom of saluting the flag in school as meaningless verbalization and as an inadequate substitute for developing patriotism; school textbooks as glorifying the tradition of war rather than peace; public utility officials for polluting the sources of education with biased propaganda; parades and uniforms for inculcating and perpetuating a martial spirit; universal military training as tending to shackle and warp the minds of young people into an attitude of unthinking obedience. Any system that trains youth for blind, unthinking obedience cannot build character. Such organizations as the Daughters of the American Revolu-

tion, the Army, and the Navy he described as agencies that seek "to tell the young what to think and to do this so early and consistently that when they are old they will not depart from it."¹ At another time he described these forces "as an outmoded world outlook, the death throes of a dry philosophy, designed not as safeguards to constitutional government but to protect the status quo."²

The professional patriots did not take such attacks quietly. Said the *National Republic*: Kilpatrick is "a member of radical organizations of so many types that it would be difficult to classify him as a red, a pink or a dupe." It also demanded that President Butler take disciplinary action against the subversive professor.

A member of the Committee of National Defense of the D.A.R., in a letter to President Butler, expressed chagrin at Kilpatrick's "un-American and dangerous teaching," and further charged: "Such doctrines as these must give great joy and satisfaction to the ever-active Communist citizens of this country."³

It should be recorded to the everlasting honor of President Butler that he refused to give the slightest heed or encouragement to these busybodies, alarmists, and witch hunters; he told them that he meant to preserve academic freedom at Columbia University on the highest plane and that he meant to shield the staff from intimidation by pressure groups who wanted conforming opinion and not honest opinion.

To the D.A.R. representative, President Butler responded as follows: "I invite your attention to the fact that a university is a carefully protected home of freedom of thought and freedom of speech, that its object is to seek and to proclaim the truth as a scholar may find it, subject only to the obvious limitations set by good manners and good morals. Professor Kilpatrick is an American gentleman and scholar of high standing and deservedly wide influence. His associates on the University take pride in his services and in his reputation."

If truth be told, the tumult and the shouting caused by Kilpatrick's

¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Conservation Forces Attack Progressive Education," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, April, 1931.

² In an interview with David Davidson, *New York Post*, March 3, 1937.

³ Letter to President Butler, December 13, 1931. The *New Masses*, an official organ of the Communist Party, was not so easily fooled. In the course of the article, "Teachers Fight Back" (August 13, 1935), B. Josephson wrote: "Prof. William Heard Kilpatrick . . . has an approach to the fight for academic freedom that is as dangerous as that of the conservatives whom he fought." Mr. Josephson and the editors of the *New Masses* probably knew that Kilpatrick approved of Dr. Abraham Lefkowitz's and Dr. Henry L. Linville's efforts to eradicate Communist influence in the New York chapter of the Teachers Union, in which organization Communists had made strong infiltrations.

direct speaking did not bother him excessively. He was comforted by the thought that Socrates also was accused of "corrupting the youth" because he wanted Athenians to think and to reexamine their mores and customs. Socrates too lived in a period when change was rapid and when Greek people had outlived their traditional ways of viewing god and man. To maintain the status quo, which was out of joint, the conservatives made Socrates drink the hemlock, and simultaneously made Socrates a "true martyr to the best that mankind knows."⁴

Kilpatrick's most interesting tussle was probably with William Randolph Hearst, the flamboyant journalist who was expert at waging bitter warfare and at character assassination. In the thirties Hearst unloosed a hysterical campaign against progressive educators and progressive education. Hearst pitched his campaign at his customarily low intellectual level and in big, inflammatory headlines charged that progressive educators were thinly disguised Communists, who were conspiring to undermine the government and to seize power. The citadel and the central fort of the enemies of the Republic, he intimated, was Teachers College. This campaign scared his readers, as it did reactionaries, businessmen and professional patriots. But even worse, it intimidated educators themselves and made a cautious profession even more cautious and timid.

Kilpatrick was not at all intimidated; he denounced Hearst and his vile, Red-baiting campaign; and he joined with other educators in urging the Congressional Committee investigating un-American activities to investigate Hearst's "most insidious and un-American attack upon our educational institutions."⁵

Typical of Hearst's underhanded journalistic tactics, one of his newspapers sent a reporter, posing as a prospective student, to interview Professor John N. Washburne, head of the department of education of Syracuse University. The result of this supposedly innocent conversation with a student was a distorted story which appeared in the *New York Journal* under the headline "Drive All Radical Professors and Students from Universities."

At about the same time Professor George S. Counts of Teachers College received a letter in which the writer said that he planned to register at that institution the following spring and that he had been told by friends and former instructors that "I can get [there] real stuff about capitalism, socialism, and communism . . . They tell me that you and several of your

⁴ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Limitations upon the Academic Freedom of Public School Teachers," *Teachers College Record*, 37:94-99, November, 1935.

⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, December 24, 1934.

associates are real liberals and not afraid to give the liberal side on subjects in your classes." The writer also wanted to know whether there were "any liberal or even forthright communistic organizations or clubs at the college that I might join for discussion."⁶

Forewarned by Dr. Washburne's experience, Professor Counts immediately linked the two together. He invited the writer to visit him, and when he did, Dr. Counts interviewed him in the presence of a stenographer. Before the interview was over, the caller, much confused, confessed that he was a Hearst reporter and had written the letter for the purpose of getting material to stir up "Red" fears.

Kilpatrick was also honored by the hocus-pocus of having a "prospective student" go through the rigmarole of inquiring how to get straight-from-the-shoulder information about radical organizations; and Kilpatrick received him also in the presence of a stenographer.⁷ Portions of the colloquy follow:

Kilpatrick: How do you feel about doing this kind of thing?

Reporter: Just about as you think I feel. I don't like it very much. I hope when the Newspaper Guild achieves its complete organization this sort of thing will go.

Kilpatrick: I have a feeling when I read a Hearst paper that the editorial policy is dishonest, that it is not advocating things because it believes them but because it wants to advocate them for some other reason. Almost every appeal is a demagogic appeal. Does that seem true to you?

Reporter: You could find instances of it. Many of them. Say last spring when we wanted the McLeod Bill to go through. We were instructed to get one hundred telegrams from various people sent to Congress saying they favored the bill. I don't think I found a single person who knew what the bill was, but we got the telegrams because of the obligations they felt to the paper.

Kilpatrick: So the telegrams were sent just to carry out the obligations to the paper?

Reporter: Certainly . . . Another instance was when Mr. Moses came out with the statement that he didn't like the approach to the Triborough Bridge. The next morning we all got instructions that we were to kill the idea—stir up people, get telegrams, etc., to the effect that people didn't want the approach changed.

Kilpatrick: Now tell me, would you not as a newspaper man rather be with a newspaper that was honestly trying to work for the good of the country? Would you not work harder and wouldn't you live a

⁶ Letter received December 14, 1934.

⁷ The same day Dr. Jesse H. Newlon, director of the Lincoln School, also was so honored.

better life? Wouldn't you be on better terms with yourself? Don't you feel ashamed to talk to me in this way?

Reporter: I am not ashamed for myself but for the situation that makes it necessary to do this in order to keep alive.

Kilpatrick: You are not ashamed for yourself?

Reporter: I would rather not do it. Probably I am ashamed, but I won't let myself be. I excuse myself on the basis of expediency.

Kilpatrick: Wouldn't it be a tremendous relief to you if that whole situation would be got rid of? Don't you think so?

Reporter: I don't think it, I know it. But after all I have had periods of being out of work. I've been on three papers that folded up unexpectedly and it is pretty tough. I wouldn't like working in a slaughter house either, but if that was the only work open, I would probably do it. There's very little choice.

Kilpatrick: I could do that with a clear conscience. I could at any rate be honest about it.

Reporter: Certainly your conscience would be clearer. But it's pretty hard to know what to do. We do get pretty sick of the things we're asked to do.⁸

To understand Kilpatrick's opposition to indoctrination we have to deviate somewhat and go back to a discussion group, organized in 1927, in which Kilpatrick occupied a central and pivotal position.⁹ This discussion group was probably the most powerful influence in Teachers College; it attracted some of the ablest men in the college, including Dewey, Counts, Childs, Watson, Brunner, Raup, Hartmann, Johnson, Newlon, Bagley, Elliott,¹⁰ and the young Dean Russell himself, as well as many others. Dean Russell was so impressed with what went on that he at one time wanted to make it the policy-making group for Teachers College. Kilpatrick rejected this suggestion, for he thought it inadvisable for any unofficial or restricted body to exercise official authority.

⁸ *Journal of the N.E.A.*, 24:51-52, February, 1935.

⁹ It should be said that discussion was meat, drink, entertainment for many of the progressive educators, and especially so to Kilpatrick. At the conclusion of the Macy Lectures, which Kilpatrick had delivered after his retirement, a group of his close associates gathered around him to do him honor. He was tired, sad, and alone, and his wife was at home seriously ill. They asked him what he should like, and he said that he should like to have a discussion on the lectures he had delivered. Bagley, Benne, Brunsar, Ernest Johnson, Newlon, Bruce Raup, Reisner, Rugg, Percival Symonds, Goodwin Watson gathered around him in a circle and for two hours they held a vigorous discussion. Even at educational conventions, instead of listening to scheduled speakers, they would organize forums, panel discussions, or thrash out, in more intimate groups, what position to take on social, educational, and political questions. In this fashion they worked out many problems in connection with educational yearbooks and public pronouncements.

¹⁰ Professor Elliott was connected with the adjoining Union Theological Seminary.

From this group emanated a strong liberal influence that overflowed nationally into every area of education. This group provided the breeding ground from which emerged the John Dewey Society with its many important educational yearbooks; the two progressive magazines, *Social Frontier*, and *Frontiers of Democracy*; also from here came the groundwork for the Educational Foundations Courses, in which Teachers College pioneered and which have been widely adopted throughout the country; also from this group came the inspiration for Kilpatrick's own book, *Education and the Social Crisis*.

Professor Counts threw down the gauntlet for a controversy that is still current, in his book *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?* in which he declared that progressive education was planless, that it excessively stressed the individualism of the child. Educators should consciously and deliberately plan, he said, for a more ethical and social society, one that would be more cooperative and "collectivistic" in character. Although Counts and Goodwin Watson were closely identified with this thinking, they represented the views of a considerable proportion of progressive educators, especially those who were close to Kilpatrick in this discussion group.

These views came forth strong during the dark days of the depression, in the early thirties, when from twelve to fifteen million workers were idle, when one out of four persons in a wealthy city like New York was on relief; when hundreds of thousands of children went without breakfast to school; when high school and college graduates could find no jobs and saw no future or prospect of a future; when millions of families were impoverished and did not have the wherewithal for food or shelter. It was indeed a black period in American history. Factories were idle; people wore threadbare clothes and shoes with holes and had empty stomachs because there was too much unsold clothing and too many unsold shoes and there was too much grain in the granaries.

It was the social-minded members of the Teachers College faculty who reacted violently to such human degradation and misery. They thought that it was a shame and disgrace for educators to stand by and do nothing. The foremost members of this group were Counts, Watson, Newlon, Childs, and Rugg. They were discontented with the status quo, and they advocated drastic changes in the entire economic setup. Emphasizing democracy as a method, they wanted industry reorganized on democratic lines and to serve democratic purposes; they wanted communities organized on democratic lines and to be suffused with democratic ideals. They held that in our complex, interdependent society *laissez faire*, individualism, and self-seeking competitiveness could no longer function and was

outmoded; it was wicked, harmful, and deleterious to the common welfare.

In its place they advocated planning and a planned society, and they maintained that this planned society should seek a more even distribution of wealth and ensure stability of employment and provide security for all the people. They felt that teachers should play a pivotal role in this new, improved society. Teachers should not only create the "blueprint" of this good future society, but the schools should prepare children for living in this good society, not, as it was doing, for the evil prevailing one.

Said Professor Counts:

If an educational movement or any other movement calls itself progressive, it must have orientation; it must possess direction. The word itself implies moving forward and moving forward can have little meaning in the absence of clearly defined purposes. . . . Here, I think, we find the weaknesses, not only of progressive education, but also of American education generally. . . . It has elaborated no theory of social welfare, unless it be that of anarchy or extreme individualism. . . . I am prepared to defend the thesis that all education contains a large element of imposition, that in the very nature of the case that is inevitable. That the existence and evolution of society depend upon it, that it is consequently eminently desirable, and that the frank acceptance of this fact by the educators is a professional obligation." . . . "We should give our children a vision of the possibilities which lie ahead and endeavor to enlist their loyalties and enthusiasms in the realization of the vision."¹¹

Various members of this group also accepted the Marxian theory of the class struggle: There exist in our society two classes, the capitalist class and the working class. What is helpful to one class is automatically harmful to the other. What helps the capitalist class harms the working class. Hence, continual warfare is being waged between the two classes, as each battles for advantage. This bitter warfare is inherent in the very nature of a capitalistic society. The capitalist class are banded together to fight for their vested interests. The working class, exploited and oppressed, also should band together, if they are to carry on a successful struggle.

In nearly all respects—in their criticism of our society, in wanting a more just, moral, ethical, and democratic society—Kilpatrick was in hearty agreement with this group. He too wanted a planned society; he too felt that our present society was chaotic, disjointed, inequitable, immoral. "The industrial revolution," he quoted, "has substituted unemploy-

¹¹ Pp. 197-98, Quoted by I. B. Berkson, *Education Faces the Future* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1943) from George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (New York: John Day, 1932).

ment for famine as a nightmare of mankind." He also was appalled at the unequal distribution of wealth and the horrible poverty of the masses. "If you take all the incomes and put them in a row one-tenth of 1 per cent of the families at the top have as much as 42 per cent on the other end of the line."¹²

He too felt that the only hope to make our system function efficiently and well lay in cooperation. We were trying to run a twentieth-century industrial economy with a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century agrarian economy. It simply wouldn't work:

... a theory may live long after its brains are knocked out. . . . In our interdependent economy, man produces for an impersonal market. That there is something fundamentally wrong with our economy is plain to see. . . . We have so many agencies of production, but they are paralyzed; so many agencies of distribution, but they do not distribute; when we have goods heaped up high—wheat in our storehouses—but people actually suffering for food and clothing. . . . When we consider that this thing happens every decade or so, that it is something like a recurring fever, we must believe that there is present a permanent source of difficulty, and that we must somehow get at the source.¹³

He had nothing but contempt for a do-nothing, wait-and-see, hope-and-pray attitude toward economic maladjustment. In olden days when populations were scourged by plagues, they sought help from priests, prayers, and sacrifices. In primitive communities medicine men still attempt cures in the same fashion. As we applied scientific methods, as we studied the problem, we knew more and more what to do about disease and we resorted less and less to cant and hocus-pocus. "To be dependent thus on the chance working of this blind juggernaut business system is slavery, our new slavery. And the new 1776 is to recognize this dependence on blind chance for the slavery that it is, and to will independence from it, independence now, independence forever, as Patrick Henry said in that earlier day."¹⁴ ". . . Why not deal with the present evil as moderns have learned to deal with these former pestilences of disease. *Why not act fully and clearly on experimental thinking*, and so win entire freedom not only from the fickle confidence, but the whole machinery of offended gods and officious priests and from the perpetual round of sacrifices offered up in public only to be consumed in private."¹⁵

¹² Mimeographed report of a conference of teachers of the Webster Groves (Mo.) Public Schools at Northwestern University, 1940.

¹³ W. H. Kilpatrick, "What Is Good Education?" *Educational Council Bulletin*, Vol. II, November 3 and 4, 1931.

¹⁴ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Social Planning: Today's 1776 and 1787," *Frontiers of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 52.

¹⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Awaiting Business Confidence: A Modern Version of an Ancient Superstition," *Social Frontiers*, 4:177, No. 35, March, 1938. It is for this

He also believed that our economic system miseducated; that it placed a premium on selfishness and self-seeking. And this had an unwholesome effect on character, since each individual made decisions that were essentially self-seeking and selfish. They became what they practiced. "Those who so act in disregard of social consequences will, in a certain large proportion, grow . . . indifferent or callous to matters of public concern. . . . In sober fact we pay our citizens, both by obvious money returns and by social approval of money success, to disregard the public welfare."¹⁶ Our economic system polluted the very sources of government, for selfish interests sought to corrupt public officials, who in turn had to think in terms of self-interest, not of the larger good. "Similarly in art and literature, the artist can live only as he sells his work. Who pays the piper calls the tune. The artist is not free to follow his highest vision. So with the writer. So with the newspaper man. So with the moving pictures. So with the radio. All are run, not to serve the highest and best that is known, but rather to make profit. If degrading the popular taste pays, then taste is degraded." Surrounded by such a civilization and such an environment, children could not help acquiring evil learnings.

But this need not be. The profit motive is of recent origin. It is a fallacy to assume that man will not work for the common good. "During most of the long past men lived in small tribes where they hunted or fished for the common welfare, but with no thought of financial gain. Moreover, they shared in common what they got. Individualistic effort—each man for himself is—as the whole human period goes—a very modern affair."¹⁷

Although he found many faults with our economic system, he was vigorous and blunt in his rejection of any predetermined plan to be foisted on any group; and he was unequivocal in his rejection of the Marxian theory of the class struggle. ". . . but so much I know sure, our country will not go the Russian way. Whatever we do, we must . . . work it out ourselves, to fit our situation." He loathed the deceit and dishonesty

reason that he had such a high regard for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt was not content to wait for the economic plague to run its course; he did something: he tried this and that and the other thing. Kilpatrick did not agree on the wisdom of all that Roosevelt did; but he liked the method.

¹⁶ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Educational Ideas and the Profit Motive," *Social Frontier*, Vol. I, No. 2.

¹⁷ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Educational Ideas and the Profit Motive," *Social Frontier*, Vol. I, No. 2. Kilpatrick has apparently shifted from the emphasis given above. He now stresses, as he did not then, the need for as much free enterprise and freedom of initiative as is consistent with the maximum development of each person, no matter how humble his birth. As he puts it, he should like an economic system that would allow a son of the president of General Motors and a son of a cobbler to have the same opportunities to develop, grow, and achieve. If there are any inherent aspects of the economy that prevent this opportunity for equal development, he should like to have changes made to ensure the foregoing.

of Communists. They deliberately aggravated discord, "whether in labor disputes, in race problem conflicts, in anti-war strikes, in academic freedom controversies . . . Any revolutionary worker or adherent of the working class is absolved from all ordinary moral obligations in his class struggle dealings with the opposition."¹⁸ Evil means do not justify good ends, for "always means, including morality, must be chosen with due regard for consequences; our democratic tradition of discussion and voting seems far more promising of good results; to condition youth to any fixed-in-advance and undebatable position is abhorrent."¹⁹

Kilpatrick rejects the Marxian theory of the class struggle for America. It may hold for Europe, where cleavages are sharper and the classes fairly distinct, but certainly not in America. If the class struggle held true for America, then the Republican Party would represent one class and the Democratic Party another, and the divergence between the two parties would become ever wider and the division ever sharper. But that is not so at all. In America, when one party attracts votes by advocating social legislation, the opposing party steals that issue and promises much more and greater amounts of the same. In America all parties struggle to amass votes, and are quick to discover what proposals are good vote catchers; and they are alert to adopt and to identify themselves with such proposals.

He is quite willing to admit that in America there exists a socioeconomic scale, that there are social classes and even entrenched political forces, which entail much evil. But in America—he avoids including Europe—there is a great deal of flexibility; the classes are not distinct and not marked off; they are fluid. Especially is there economic and political fluidity. In the history of America—now as in the past—immigrant groups, coming here without economic or political power, acquire in a generation or two both economic well-being and political influence. This fluidity—the dynamic nature of our economic, political and social life—negates the Marxian theory of the class struggle.

This, however, was not the crux of Kilpatrick's disagreement with the "social planners." He was in sympathy with too many of their ultimate aims and objectives to walk a path alone. The break developed over the issue of indoctrination, for this touched a tender spot, the very core of his philosophy. Just as the present fixed curriculum was meant to prepare and to indoctrinate the child for the present culture, the curriculum

¹⁸ W. H. Kilpatrick, "High Marxism Defined and Rejected," *Social Frontier*, June, 1936.

¹⁹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Public Education as a Force for Social Improvement," Department of Superintendence, N.E.A., 1934-1935.

for the new society (which the group would evolve) would indoctrinate for that society. That meant subject matter fixed in advance; it meant marks and examinations and chores and tasks, regardless of the intrinsic needs and interests of the individual. It is true that Kilpatrick believed in planning, but he wanted students to be taught how to plan, how to think, how to work out problems, not how to effectuate made-in-advance plans. Kilpatrick placed his faith in intellectual inquiry, in the free inquiring mind, in a system of education under which children from early childhood tried to solve environmental problems. To indoctrinate a child was to enslave the child; it was to make him less able to think independently. Dewey stated this, as follows: "... Though this method slay my most cherished belief, yet will I trust it." Democracy itself must be continually reexamined and revised. "Democracy, to be itself, cannot indoctrinate even itself,"²⁰ insisted Kilpatrick.

The best and only way to teach children how to think about unsettled and controversial situations is to have children grapple with real unsettled and controversial situations. "Simply to indoctrinate them with what has been taught is to indoctrinate them against thinking."²¹ Children as well as adults should be continually criticizing their institutions for needed improvements. Indoctrination "aims to fasten in the learner a teacher-chosen set of answers, fasten therein so firmly that the indoctrinated one will successfully oppose any subsequent outside effort to upset them. Two things would then follow: the learner remains henceforth the thought-slave of the teacher and the answers so included remain as absolutes—they have to serve however times may change."²²

Even should the schools want to indoctrinate for tomorrow's society, this is impossible, for we are living in a changing civilization, in a civilization changing ever more rapidly, with increasing velocity. This era of "scientifically tested thought" ensures permanent transition and change.

Until the age of invention set in, society was fairly static. For thirty thousand years man did not improve on his chipped-flint implements. From the day of Caesar to that of Bonaparte there was no appreciable difference in the speed with which a message could be delivered from Rome to Paris. Since then what kaleidoscopic changes have taken place!

In 1900 Henry Adams wrote: "In essentials like religion, ethics, philosophy; in history, literature, art; in the concepts of all science, except

²⁰ W. H. Kilpatrick, *New Republic*, November 8, 1939.

²¹ W. H. Kilpatrick, "Freedom in Schools," *New York Times*, July 14, 1935.

²² W. H. Kilpatrick, "Great Social Choices Before Us—Their Means for Education," *Childhood Education*, Vol. 20, No. 7, March, 1944, pp. 295-299.

perhaps mathematics—the American boy of 1854 stood nearer the year one than the year 1900.” J. B. S. Haldane (in 1930) expressed the same thought as follows: “Today the external conditions of life in civilized communities differ more from those of 1830 than did the conditions of 1830 from those at the time of Noah’s flood.” Within the past fifty years, sixty-five thousand applications of electricity have been placed at man’s disposal. More inventions have been made in the past one hundred fifty years than in the previous one thousand years. “In 1894, a distinguished scientist, Lord Kelvin, I think, made the statement: ‘We have now discovered all the major laws of physics. Henceforth, we shall discover at best only minor laws. Our main effort shall be the application and refinement of thinking.’ Forty years later, Michelson, the foremost American physicist, said that not one of those laws is believed to be true.”²³

This world of permanent change makes every day unique and different. For this novelly developing universe, it is necessary to teach students “to dare to think,” not what to think, for to do the latter is not only unwise but impossible. “. . . we must help students to see that it will not suffice to arrive at a good solution, a good way of doing things. The changing situation will soon call this way into question.”²⁴

This kind of civilization requires creativeness, new ways of doing things. “To help find promising places for creation, to help build the wish to create, to help find the means for better creation—in these the educator has the higher duty. In creative work life has infinite possibilities.”²⁵

Perhaps no paragraph presents more accurately the feeling and thinking of Kilpatrick than this paragraph written by H. G. Creel in discussing Confucius and his beliefs:

. . . Authoritarianism tempts him [the individual] with pageantry and with final solutions to all problems; democracy offers only simple human dignity, and a chance to work unceasingly for human happiness, with no reward save the opportunity to go on working. The last battle of democracy can never be fought. Nor can the supreme goal of democracy be a perfect state or a perfect government, in the sense of static perfection, for it is an illusion to suppose that things will ever cease to change. Democracy can hope only to produce men and women who are capable of meeting new situations effectively.²⁶

²³ W. H. Kilpatrick, “Living Faith of Youth,” *Biosophical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, May, 1941.

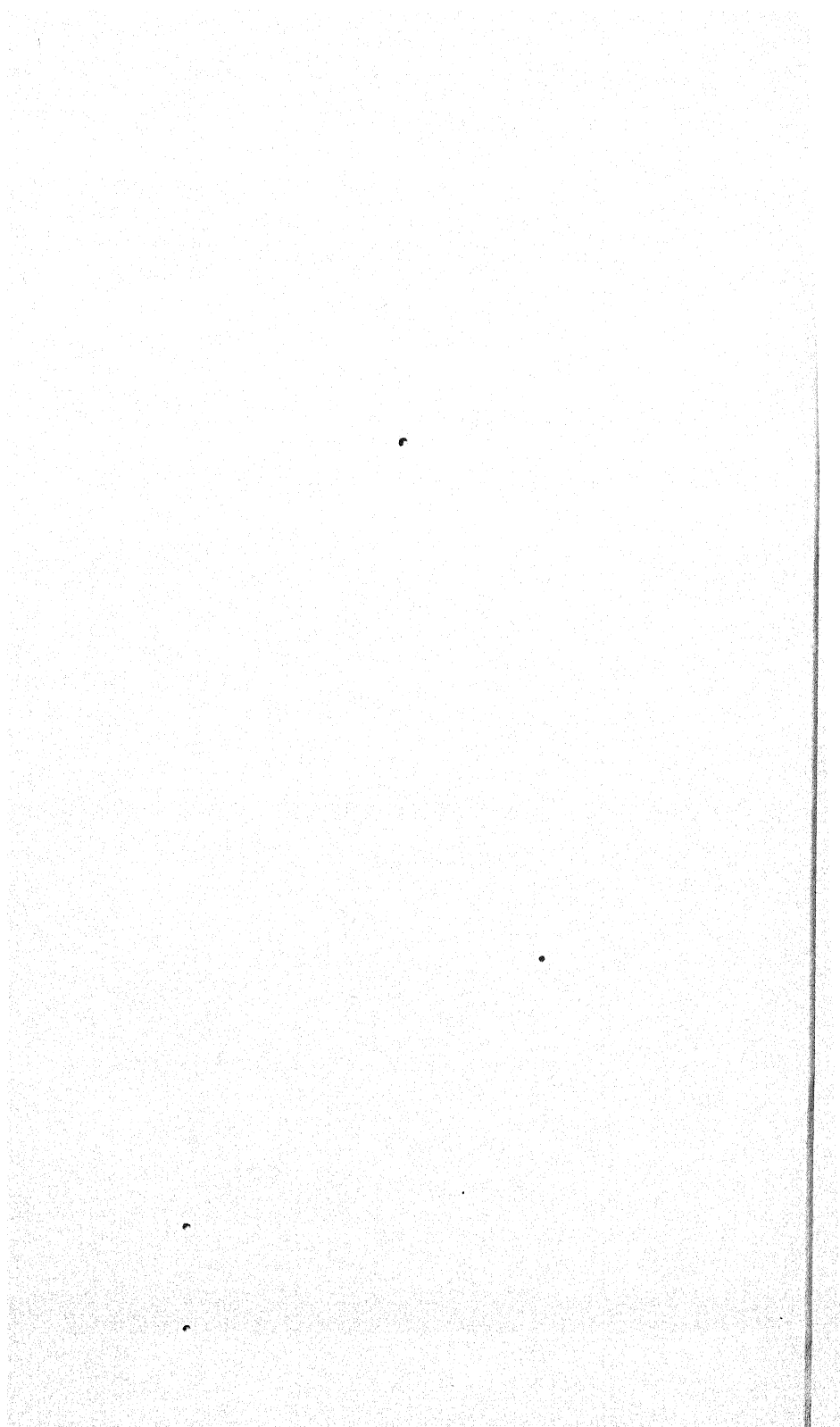
²⁴ W. H. Kilpatrick, *Philosophy of Education*. This quotation appeared in the original draft of the manuscript.

²⁵ W. H. Kilpatrick, “A Reconstruction Theory of the Educational Process,” *Teachers College Record*, 32:530-58, March, 1931.

²⁶ H. G. Creel, *Confucius: The Man and the Myth* (New York: John Day Co.), quoted in Magazine Section of the *New York Times*, September 25, 1949.

PART VIII

Retirement



CHAPTER XXXIII

"A Rose and a Glass of Wine"

ON HIS sixty-fifth birthday, Kilpatrick received a congratulatory letter from President Butler. Since this was Butler's first such recognition of his birthday, Kilpatrick was reminded of a popular Chinese custom. When a Chinese wanted to dismiss an employee, he invited him to his home on New Year's Day and then gave him "a rose and a glass of wine as a notification of dismissal." In Kilpatrick's case, it worked out exactly so. The full story of the way Kilpatrick was separated from his work in the midstream of his life cannot now be told. The bold fact is that the college authorities insisted on abiding by a regulation that required all faculty members to retire when they reached the age of sixty-five. It can also be said that Kilpatrick wanted to stay on—on a yearly basis or on a part-time basis, or under any other arrangement by which he could continue his work. He himself saw the value of a mandatory retirement regulation: he felt that otherwise there was the danger of a college faculty's becoming burdened and weighed down by senile members whose usefulness was nil. In his own case, it can be said that he was mentally alert, as capable as ever. His classes were larger than any others in the college. His theories were taking hold in the country under the name of the "activity movement." His position in the field of the philosophy of education was preeminent; no younger person had come up to challenge him or supplant him in any respect. His reputation not only encompassed the United States, but his name was favorably known abroad. His students all over the world were molding new kinds of schools and a new kind of education. Kilpatrick hoped that some arrangement might be made whereby he could serve on a yearly basis, as long as it served the best interests of the college and the students. But this was not to be. In August, 1937, Kilpatrick severed all formal teaching connections with Teachers College, and, after a year's sabbatical, he was officially retired on July 1, 1938.

As the news began to percolate concerning Kilpatrick's possible termination of services, there was profound shock among educators, more so outside the college than inside. At Teachers College there were faculty members who were subject-matter minded and so opposed to Kilpatrick's philosophy of education; there were still other opponents, those who were perhaps envious of his large classes, his influence with students and his *prima donna* position. Nevertheless, none of this lessened by one whit the universal support and acclaim that he was to receive. Overnight, full blown, spontaneous, warm, and enthusiastic support came to him as comes to few men. He was suffused with a nation-wide love, affection, and acclaim.

Dr. Studebaker, then United States commissioner of education, described Kilpatrick as "one of the greatest teachers in the world."

In a statement to the *New York Times*, John Dewey said: "It seems to me unfortunate that an institution has a man as highly gifted a teacher as Dr. Kilpatrick and cannot arrange to continue his services. I am not in sympathy with the rule of the teacher's college unless there is provision for exception."¹

At the 1937 meeting of the Department of Superintendents of the N.E.A., held in New Orleans, Kilpatrick became a cause célèbre, as progressive educators rallied to his defense. Witnessing this warm manifestation of affection, Kilpatrick said that he knew he had many friends, but he never knew he had so many and such good friends. Under the leadership of Professor William Gellerman of Northwestern University, more than seven thousand former students, representing thirty-nine states, Newfoundland, and the Hawaiian Islands, signed a petition, hurriedly prepared, asking for Kilpatrick's retention. In this petition it was pointed out that Professors Henry Johnson, Franklin Baker and Paul Monroe "taught beyond sixty-five to the great benefit of Teachers College." President Butler himself was seventy-four at the time.

At the Progressive Education Association meeting, held in February, 1937, at St. Louis, Kilpatrick was hailed by five thousand educators as a prophet of a "distinct type of education suitable to a democracy"; at that meeting he was enveloped in so much warmth and affection as to leave him emotionally limp. Trying hard to control his feelings, Kilpatrick said: "In a sense I hear that I am to be or have been officially declared incompetent from July 1st on, but I would say with Mark Twain, 'I think the account is greatly exaggerated.'"²

The leave-taking from educational associations, students, and colleagues was warm and sincere. The Philosophy of Education Club held a dinner

¹ *New York Times*, February 23, 1937.

² *New York Times*, February 27, 1937.

in his honor, in which foreign students, dressed in native costumes of South Africa, Canada, China, India, Greece, Iraq, Persia, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, paid him tribute. What pleased him especially was the presence of John Dewey, who spoke in high praise of his book *Education for a Changing Civilization*, and of Professor Childs, a close associate, who said that he was among the first professors at Columbia University; a surprise to him, albeit a most pleasant one. The Chinese Education Club presented him with a small statue of Buddha, "The Most Wise Man." In his honor, Ohio University held in 1937 a conference on progressive education. In Indianapolis he received a scroll expressing the high regard of the Jewish Education Association.³ On the concluding day of the school year, his classes became forums for expressions of regard and tributes by both students and faculty members. A student brought him a bouquet of flowers "and one of their number speaks appreciatively. I try to reply, but ingloriously break down entirely."⁴

He was destined to receive still other honors, for he was to continue to teach through the summer. Over one thousand enrolled for the two courses in which he taught. One of these classes had an enrollment of six hundred and twenty students, his largest class since 1926; and like the old days, it was too large for any room in Teachers College; not even Horace Mann auditorium was adequate, and the class had to be transferred to McMillin Theater. At the conclusion of the course, which really marked his last official days at the college, three thousand students and friends assembled in the Columbia University gymnasium to do him honor. Dr. Frank E. Baker, a former student who was president of the State Teachers College at Milwaukee, spoke in eulogy, saying that Kilpatrick was "the apostle of education to American democracy." If his teachings and that of Dewey were followed, "the idea of property would not become paramount over personality and American democracy would not have suffered so sorely from the cankering greed of materialism."

Under the chairmanship of Professor R. Bruce Raup, another former student who was professor of educational philosophy, students raised a fund for a portrait of Kilpatrick.⁵ The American Education Fellowship,

³ In his early days at Teachers College, while conducting a discussion group, he came to know a group of students, including Berkson, Dushkin, Chipkin, and Gamoran, all of whom attained high positions in Jewish education. For this group he has always kept an open door; and to this day his friendship with them has continued warm and cordial.

⁴ Diary, April 5, 1937.

⁵ The portrait is now hanging in the Teachers College library. A part of the excess funds was set aside to defray the cost of a medal to be known as the Kilpatrick Award for a distinguished contribution in the field of educational philosophy by either a student or a faculty member.

the new name for the Progressive Education Association, indited this tribute to him:

The American Education Fellowship in conferring this award upon Dr. William Heard Kilpatrick not only honors one of the most creative thinkers in the history of American education but also itself in so doing. For Dr. Kilpatrick's thinking and achievements have been one of the cornerstones upon which the theory and practices known as progressive education have rested. As a thinker it was his great achievement to lead in the development of a theory of education which accepts without discount the moral implications of democracy and the philosophical and methodological implications of experimental science. As a pragmatist he did not stop with the formulation of a theory, but went on to forge a classroom procedure consonant with his theory. As a teacher he communicated his vision and program to educators from all parts of the country and the world. Today children are happier and richer because of the reconstruction his ideas have wrought in the schools. Democracy itself is stronger because of the life and teachings of Dr. Kilpatrick.

The press too joined in honoring him. The Sunday Book Review Section of the *New York Times* devoted a front-page article to him, and the *New York Herald Tribune* published a most complimentary account of his achievements.

But still he was retired. This came to him rather pointedly when Bennington College, of which he has the fondest recollections, failed to reappoint him to its Board of Trustees. "It comes," he wrote in his diary, "as a kind of a shock, but it is of course what I must henceforth expect."⁶ One day when he left his house to go to Teachers College, as was his wont, his wife chided him, saying it was not seemly because people would say he was "hanging around."⁷

But lifetime habits were not easily broken, and he could not, deep down, really believe that he was severed from his beloved Teachers College. As an emeritus professor he was assigned an office, but he was to be denied even this tenuous connection when he was officially informed that because of crowded conditions the college could not maintain separate emeritus offices. The college planned to provide a large common room where he could maintain a desk and files. "... I must now move my files and dispose of my surplus books ... retired officers must simply understand that they have retired."⁸

In his diary, he recorded this dream:

⁶ Diary, January 10, 1939.

⁷ Diary, September 14, 1938.

⁸ Diary, May 27, 1938. On his retirement as chairman of the Board of Trustees, Bennington College in 1938 awarded him an LL.D. degree.

Last night I dreamed that I was working in my office in TC as of old with Miss Ostrander when my office began to have others given places in it; so that it became more and more filled.

I could hardly get about in it, and the newcomers laughed and talked in a way to interfere with my work. Once I spoke sharply that there was too much noise.

One day Miss X came to see me and we had to go outside into the hall in order to talk. There was no room inside. She perplexed me. She was discussing a course in the philosophy of education but I could not make out whether she wished to give it alone or whether she wished to have some part in it. As she left, I said to myself that things had come to a pretty pass when Miss X was giving work in the Philosophy of Education [which of course would have been true; one less fitted could hardly be found].

When I returned to my office, everything had been changed. Miss Ostrander was gone. My desks and chairs were gone. Chairs were set in a circle, etc. I finally found a chair not in use and sought a place to put it. When I spoke someone answered "I do not think you quite understand. I am told that the purpose of this room has been quite changed." Thereupon, it came to me that things were changed, and I said, "You are right. Things have changed. I am now retired. I have no place here. And while I think of it, I wish to apologize for speaking as I did the other day, objecting to the noise you are making. It was not my room (I see it now), and I apologize to you for so speaking." Many who heard me nodded, as if to say that I spoke now truly. So I left and that was the end.⁹

It took a long time for Kilpatrick to face up to the situation that he was no longer a part of Teachers College; for some time he had a lingering hope and belief that he might be asked to participate in some work with students. Not that there was a dearth of purposeful activity for him. The wide publicity in connection with his retirement resulted in a spate of lecture engagements which would have kept him busy for a long time. And there was his editorial work on the *Social Frontier* and with the John Dewey Society. But he always thought of himself as a teacher; lecturing was only a popular product of his serious classroom work. Even of academic work he had offers aplenty. Dean Melby of the School of Education of Northwestern University wanted him there on any condition: he could set his own terms. He could come as a full-time professor or for part-time work; he could give one course or two courses; as for financial consideration, that too would be most generous. On hearing of his availability, the southern universities, which to Kilpatrick had loomed so important for a great part of his life, came to claim him as their own. The University of North Carolina and the University of

⁹ Diary, November 3, 1938.

Florida wanted him. The University of Georgia urged and pleaded with him to come there. A delegation from that institution, comprising Chancellor S. V. Sanford of the University of Georgia system, President Caldwell of the university and two regents of the university, Sandy Beaver and Abit Nix, journeyed to New York in an effort to "persuade him to accept some measure and degree, as much as I will, of the deanship of the new Graduate School of Education they propose to open up." What Kilpatrick would not have given for such an opportunity earlier in life! What irony this was! And there was Dean Kefauver, who wanted him to teach at the Leland Stanford summer session. Also, there was the Progressive Education Association, which wanted him to hold conferences over the country with teachers.

So there was no scarcity of purposeful activity. But his ties to Teachers College were strong, he felt that there he could do his best work and wield his greatest influence. He was loath to accept any of the southern offers; for he believed that there he would be out of the stream of things, and his influence would be vastly diminished. Northwestern University would provide him with a good forum, but living there would take him away from his home, his books, and his beloved study; and from his organizational activities; also he would have to build up his reputation anew, and he felt too tired to start afresh.

So he compromised. He went to Northwestern University for the fall term, and there he conducted a regular course for students and held a seminar for the faculty; also he journeyed often to Chicago to lecture before teachers and social workers. At Northwestern University he found a warm welcome and made many friends. Perhaps nothing could indicate better the cordial spirit that prevailed there than by quoting from his diary what he set down on his birthday, the first after his retirement:

Nov. 20, 1937, Saturday. This is my birthday. It is hard to believe that I am 66 years old. I figure that I have probably some 12 more years to live. My feelings are not very definite. I do feel older, partly because I am "away from home" and have allowed myself to accept too many engagements and am feeling the effects of having promised more than I can deliver. So far as I can tell my thinking is just as good, just as clear, just as creative as ever it has been. As for my acceptance with others, my addresses are more acceptable on the whole than ever before. I am not sure that I see why or wherein, but the fact seems clear. My physical health seems as good as ever, tho I am clearly not as supple as I once was. My eyes are as good as for 15 or 20 years. My ears are not so good, as the last few weeks have shown. I have no ache nor ailment. I sleep well, and I work pretty well. I miss my sister, Helen, very much.

There is no one now who quite connects me with my boyhood life. My own family unity seems therein broken. I begin to feel that my life work is nearly done. I have a few books yet to write, but aside from that I feel more like stepping aside. So far I have so many calls and invitations I cannot step aside, but at times I feel much like it.

Write at sundry matters that had accumulated. I cannot catch up nowadays. At noon W. W. Biddle of the Milwaukee State Teachers College comes, with his wife, to lunch with us. They both studied under me, and he has been one of my loyal friends all the while and I have been his adviser. We talk pleasantly together at lunch and after lunch before the open fire in the drawing room.

After they go I go to the office, unlocking the front door, read mail and sign letters. At 6:15 Gellerman calls for us in his car to take us to a faculty dinner given to us in my honor at the Orrington Hotel. All the School of Education [Northwestern University] are there with their wives and some others. I sit between Mrs. Melby and Margaret. Dean Melby presides. Ex-Dean Stout, Dean Beattie of the School of Music [a former student] and Dr. Anderson [Ed.D. from T.C., 1936] speak. The latter presents me with a copy of Van Wyck Brooks' *Flowering of New England* with the signatures of the faculty on the fly leaf. Just before the speaking began a waiter appeared with a big cake surrounded with burning candles. Those present began to sing, "Happy Birthday to you." And the cake was placed in front of me. It was a pure accident that the dinner was on my birthday. They had not known of the day when the date was fixed. Margaret and I had kept it to ourselves, so this was quite a surprise to us. I was called upon to speak when Anderson sat down. As I had not been asked to speak in advance of the dinner, I made no preparation; so when Dean Melby whispered to me a few moments earlier that I should take as long as I wished, I asked him what I should say. He suggested a repetition of the personal reminiscence that he had heard me give, in fact, twice before (the second at his request, Jan., 1936). So I did speak of myself, but avoided practically all that I had previously used. They seemed to like it (a few days later I was much surprised to be asked by Dr. Everett to repeat it to his parents on Dec. 9). All present were very kindly, and we much appreciated the honor of the occasion.¹⁰

Yet there was a sadness about it all; he did feel in a sense that he was walking on the down side of the hill. His sister, Helen,¹¹ to whom he was deeply attached and who kept him close to his home roots, White Plains, Georgia, had recently died. To Kilpatrick, the loss was irreparable; it meant that part of the South, the strongest and deepest ties with the South, died with her. His wife, Margaret, had been suffering from high blood pressure, and the trip to Northwestern University with her

¹⁰ Since Dr. Melby has become dean of the School of Education at New York University, bringing with him a number of the faculty from Northwestern, Kilpatrick has come to feel very close to this institution.

¹¹ Died, February 1, 1938.

husband had aggravated the condition. When Kilpatrick went to Stanford University to teach during the summer session, he rented a "beautiful little house and a garden at the edge of the university, and she stayed there most of the day while I went back and forth to my classes." On her way back to New York, Mrs. Kilpatrick suffered a heart attack while crossing the Rocky Mountains. She was never well after that. On returning from Teachers College after delivering a lecture in the Everett Macy series, Kilpatrick found her in a semicomatose state; one side was paralyzed. She sank rapidly, and on Thanksgiving Day, 1938, she died, exactly thirty years after their marriage.

Kilpatrick tried to maintain his house alone, but he found life difficult and lonely. He stayed with his daughter for periods of time, but this was not altogether satisfactory. In his secretary, Miss Marion Ostrander, he had always had an able and devoted coworker. She had come to him in 1920, shortly after graduation from Simmons College. Her duties went much beyond merely assisting Professor Kilpatrick; she was a friend of the family and was entrusted with many responsibilities while the Kilpatricks were away from the city. While working at Teachers College, Miss Ostrander had herself developed a strong interest in education; she had taken all the courses offered by Professor Kilpatrick, and with him as her sponsor she had obtained the Ed.D. degree.¹² She was a coworker on his first *Source Book in the Philosophy of Education*, and in recognition of her services Kilpatrick had assigned one-third of his royalties to her. She also participated in assembling the second *Source Book in the Philosophy of Education*. She had given courses in the philosophy of education department; she had worked for the Progressive Education Association and was head of the department of education of Adelphi College. When Kilpatrick proposed to Miss Ostrander and she accepted, he found in her not only a wife for whom he had the highest regard but also a professional coworker who understood and was in sympathy with all his educational activities. They have built up a good life together; both engrossed in purposeful activities, many of which overlap. Kilpatrick has always been happy to receive former students and fellow educators in his home, but now that is more true than ever.

¹² It is interesting to note what Kilpatrick wrote to his mother when Miss Ostrander first came to him (Nov. 3, 1920). "... As she is capable, prepared, experienced, hard-working, resourceful and likable, I feel I am indeed fortunate. I can accomplish more and my work will I hope be of a higher order."

CHAPTER XXXIV

And for Some Last Words

NO MAN strikes out alone; we are all products of the civilization before us and the culture around us. Every contribution to mankind, no matter how great, how unique, and how lasting, has been a burgeoning from soil that has already been prepared and seeded. Kilpatrick was indeed influenced by John Dewey. It was Dewey who showed the way and laid out the road, but it was Kilpatrick who traveled and explored many side roads, going alone in many directions, finding new vistas and seeing new visions. In the end, Kilpatrick's educational contributions became really and truly his own, unique and independent, original, many, varied, fundamental, and lasting.

He was among the first to emphasize the crucial significance of attitudes in the educational process. It was he who conceived concomitant learnings, namely, that children, while they are doing their arithmetic and studying their history, are all the time building attitudes of many diverse kinds, attitudes toward teachers, toward school, toward the subject itself, toward classmates, toward themselves, and the like. It was he who brought into the classroom, in live and vital terms, many of the concepts and theories that Dewey enunciated in abstract terms. His project method had an influence on our school system—in actual classroom practice, in classroom methodology, in the everyday living of children—to an extent hardly equaled in our generation by any other educational concept. In this respect Kilpatrick has expressed his profound debt to Dewey, whose philosophy of education the project method sought to implement and make concrete. Yet the project method, as formulated by Kilpatrick, is more than Dewey; it is a creative application of Dewey, and it is also uniquely and distinctly Kilpatrick's. It should also be said that Kilpatrick's concept that "we learn what we live" and "we live what we learn" is wholly and solely his own.

These are only the outer riggings of what, I believe, are even more fundamental contributions. Kilpatrick's preeminence as an educational figure

lies not only in his educational contributions but in his life and in his work. Certainly, no educational system in any major city and probably in no town of any significance has escaped the influence of his teachings. This influence in many instances came directly from the thousands and thousands of teachers, fresh from his courses, glowing with a new vision and a new light. If not directly, this influence came indirectly, from those teachers who had taken courses with his former students who were teaching in colleges and universities; and also from his vast outpouring of books and articles. Kilpatrick has lived a consecrated life, working undeviatingly at furthering this new education, this better education—from the lecture platform, in publications, in discussion groups, in educational associations, as a member of pivotal educational committees and conferences. He has given of himself unstintingly; nothing has been too hard for him, nothing too much for him; he has not spared himself. His door has always been open. One had only to ask, and if the cause was good, Kilpatrick was ready to join with others in work. It is the powerful influence of the man as a person, along with his writings and teaching, that must be considered in appraising him. He himself has lived the good life that he has philosophically advocated; he himself ever grew, ever tried to make all things better.

His vision has been remarkably clear and accurate; only hindsight can indicate how clear and perceptive it was, and how wisely and intelligently he held to his course. In his lifetime he has never succumbed to any panaceas or to any schemes that short-circuited the educational or the democratic process. At all times he has stood steadfast for a philosophy that was grounded on the deepest respect for every individual, no matter how humble or how exalted; on the free inquiring mind; on the democratic process; on education as the bulwark for individual and social progress. True, he has proposed no "blueprint" of action, no set-in-advance program, outside of reason, study, experiment, "tested thought." He has placed his main reliance on a healthy, thriving democracy; and on its concomitants, discussion, interchange of experiences, working together, trying out things together. No matter how disheartening the prospects, he did not lose faith in man, in democracy, in education. No conservative could take comfort from Kilpatrick's teachings; for what he has always sought is the best and the wisest for the total common good, not a personal good, not a class good, not the good of entrenched interests—political, economic, or social—but the whole good; and to this end he has given of himself unstintingly.

At all times he has had the courage of his convictions. Where he has seen evil, there he attacked. No matter what the temptation, he has

never sought refuge in authoritarianism, in an inspired leader, in self-appointed superior groups. He has held steadfast to his basic principles—education and more education, thinking and more thinking, discussion and more discussion, planning and more planning, study and more study, inquiry and more inquiry; and then action and further study.

His concept of democracy exalts man and makes him the key to the conquest of the universe and places on man the duty and the obligation to make an ever-better society and an ever-better world. His is a philosophy that makes man the final resource of what is good and the amount of the prevailing good a measure of man's success. The greatness of Kilpatrick lies in the fact that he has never once lost faith in man, and he has fought any theory or any scheme that tried to minimize man's personality or the sanctity of that personality. Despite his critics, this is a program for living and for action, a lifelong program that can enrich and make noble every participant.

As perhaps no other educator, Kilpatrick has seen clearly as a crucial need that the school emphasize the quality of living, rather than subject matter or marks or prizes or awards. Education's main concern, he has insisted, should not be with books, but with character and the person. The main task of the educator is to make better persons; persons who are kindly, generous, social minded; good husbands, good wives, intelligent citizens with civic zeal prepared to participate in a democracy. And for this kind of education it is necessary that the schools become miniature societies, in which goes on rich, vital democratic living. The child should learn democracy by practicing democracy, by participating as soon as possible in both school and community enterprises. The environmental needs that face the child in his everyday living should be the curriculum of the school. The goal of education is to make socially minded, independent, critically minded citizens, who have learned how to assume responsibility, who have learned the art of give-and-take, who have learned how to cooperate in common enterprises. Books should always be subsidiary to the ongoing life.

Education should emphasize "tested thought," trying things out and seeing how they worked. In this respect every child should learn, as soon as possible, the experimental approach, watching how things worked out and then making necessary changes to make things better. What concerns Kilpatrick is the quality of life, making this quality of life and the day-by-day living of each child constantly better, richer, more adequate. There is no limit to this kind of growth. The whole aim and the whole purpose of life lie in this kind of growth, making everything better, the

living of the child, the community, home relations, the nation, the world—always making all things better. The purpose and the aim of education and the purpose and the aim of life are correlative, closely tied one with the other. The whole purpose and aim of education—as of life—is this growing, starting from childhood, continuing through adolescence, through early manhood, through maturity, until the end of life. The last day of life should be nothing more than a growth of the day before. Hence, education is not a preparation for life, but is coterminous with life itself, and should continue as long as life continues.

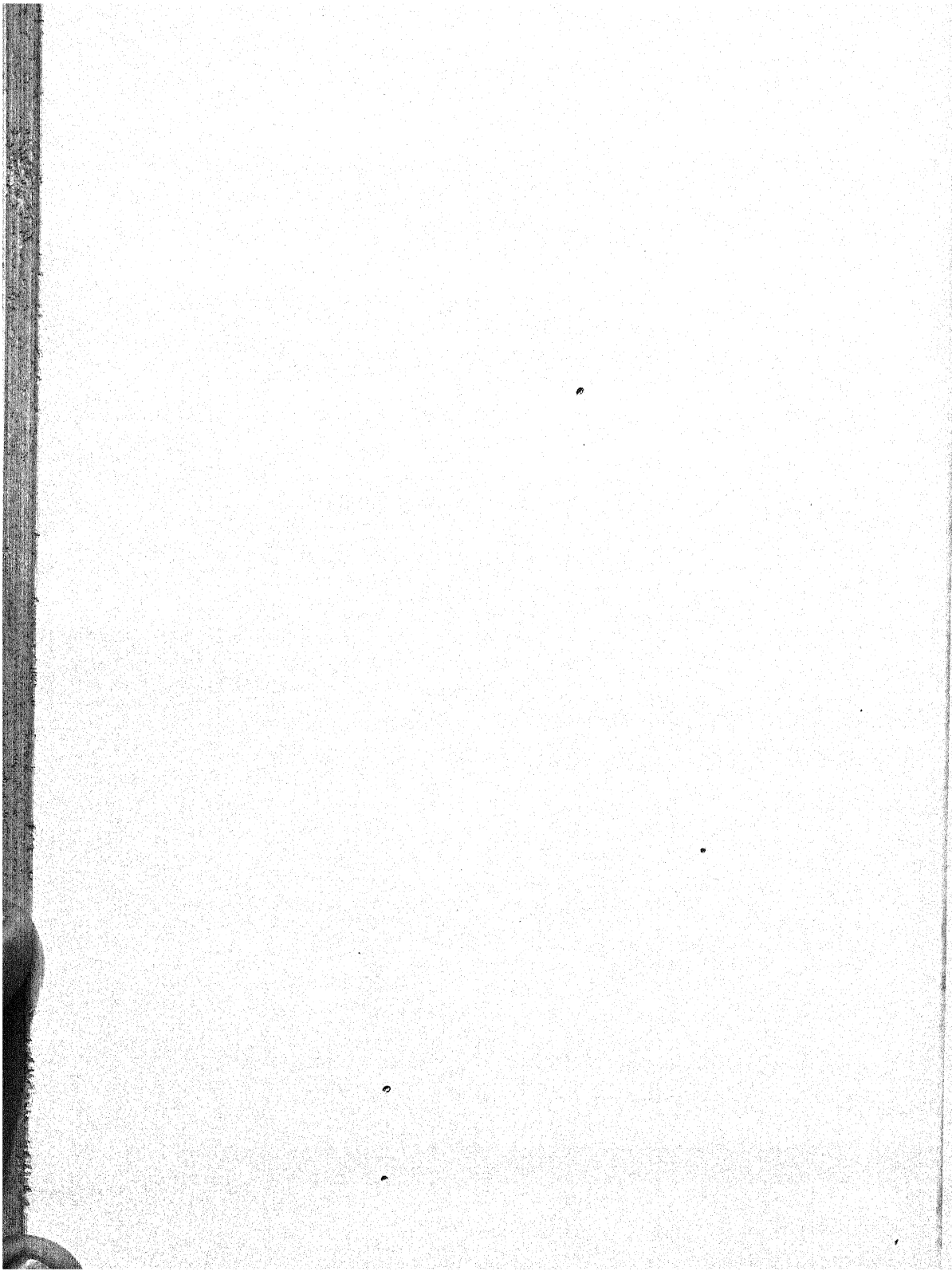
This is a dynamic, ever-changing universe; in it there is no fixity, no finality. It is, therefore, foolhardy and unwise to train a child how to act, what to think, what to do. In a fixed and static universe experts could decide what was best, and in authoritarian fashion we could indoctrinate children for this fixed world. But in a dynamic, ever-changing universe the important thing is to teach children how to think, to make them critical minded, independent, self-reliant, able to handle life's problems as they arise.

Has the lifelong fight that Kilpatrick has carried on been won? The answer is essentially no. It has been won only in isolated spots. In many areas lip service has been paid to this concept of education, but for practical purposes the books and regurgitations and examinations have been retained. In still other areas the theory has been ostensibly embraced, but many of those who have come to it as converts have been abysmally lacking in insight into the motivating and underlying principles behind Kilpatrick's teachings, so that it has produced ludicrous results. Yet as we look over the whole scene from a distance, and do not come close enough to see the wrinkles and the ridges, we can say that the American school system has made many moves in the right direction. In high schools and colleges, unfortunately, the traditional system, enthroning the book, leading to regurgitation and examinations, still stands essentially powerful and unmoved; there the inroads of the new and the better have been slight. As for the elementary schools, we have cause for rejoicing. Here in many places we find children doing creative work, painting, organizing dramatic performances, sewing costumes and building scenery, going off on trips to museums, doing research on current problems, inviting parents to a luncheon which they themselves have prepared, publishing newspapers, participating in forums and discussions.

Progressive educational philosophy has begun to percolate in the elementary schools, and many of its words and concepts have been accepted, although often the practices that go on within the building are traditional and authoritarian. A beginning has been made; the leavening process is

at work. Eventually some wise ones among the school people will say: "This which we are now doing does not fit these words which we say we believe." Someone will eventually cry out: "The king is naked, he wears no gorgeous robes." And changes will be made. The book as a basis for education has been enthroned for two thousand years. One must be patient; radical changes do not take place overnight. The textbook kind of education still has powerful defenders, many in pivotal positions. Even more, it has for support tradition, folklore, custom. The fight has not yet been won. At times it seems as if the cause has hit a nadir. Democracy is still young in both theory and practice. Every now and then a strong voice comes forth and says: "Our children are being misled. They must be told authoritatively what must be done. And what must be done, they should be forced to do." And this cry rallies many followers.

But those who have faith in man, in the dignity and the sanctity of each individual, who have respect for the free, inquiring mind; who believe that in democracy lies the hope of better individuals and of better living together, know that time is on their side; that surely and inevitably, if the world is to go forward and be a better world, this new education with its emphasis on experimentalism, on tested thought, on the free inquiring mind, on independent, self-reliant, socially minded citizens, growing always better and better, must win out; if not this decade, then the next decade; if not the next decade, then the next. One cannot allow oneself to believe otherwise.



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